

OUR VILLAGE HOMES  
PRESENT CONDITIONS & REMEDIES

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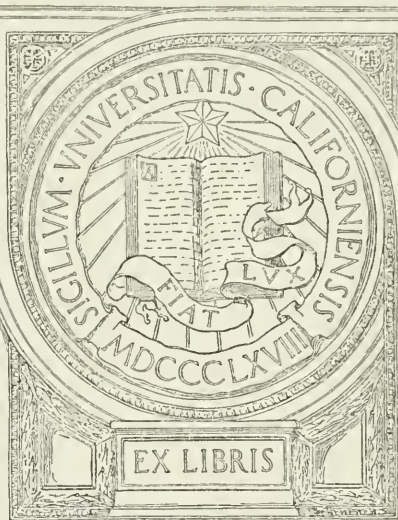


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OUR VILLAGE HOMES

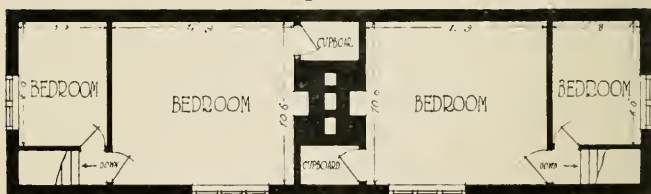






A TYPICAL PAIR OF LABOURERS' COTTAGES.

PLANS: showing their accommodation.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

The height of the room on the ground floor is 6ft. 3in. ;  
height of upstairs rooms, 7ft. 6in.

*In one of these a family of six people lived till recently.*



# Our Village Homes

Present Conditions &  
Suggested Remedies

BY

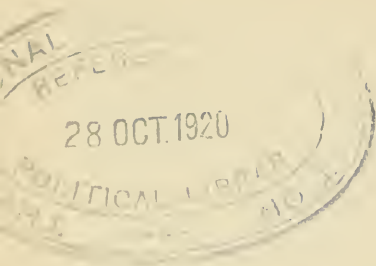
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M.A. (Oxon.), Barrister-at-Law

PREFACE BY  
LORD HENRY BENTINCK, M.P.

LONDON

THOMAS MURBY & CO.  
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1913



To  
MY FATHER  
IN RESPECT AND ADMIRATION FOR  
HIS GREAT WORK IN THE  
VILLAGE

AMERICAN BORN  
BORN IN AMERICA  
BORN IN AMERICA

## PREFACE

THE problem of Rural Housing is one to which it is necessary that we should give immediate attention. While governments are legislating for the clamorous urban voter, the less articulate countryman has hitherto been neglected. Now when the question is recognised as national, it is very necessary to approach it with knowledge and to avoid the common error that the Housing Problem is merely a question of wages. Early in the Nineteenth Century the agricultural labourer lost most of his valuable common rights, and with them went all hope of an independent existence. In all the years that have passed since then, he has had little incentive to remain on the land. None of the palliatives that have from time to time lightened his load, have prevented his emigration to the town or the colonies. To-day his urgent need is a secure home where he can live and rear his children in decency. This is just what, under present conditions, he cannot have. The cry from our villages is always the same—insufficient cottages and bad accommodation. The present Housing Acts are a step in the right direction. They would indeed be not inadequate had they a real driving power behind them. Housing Commissioners furnished with a grant from the Treasury to assist and encourage Local Authorities would provide such a power. A vigorous policy of closing insanitary cottages and replacing them by

others is necessary, and it is at present impossible without aid from the State.

We ought to welcome very heartily any effort to call attention to this problem and Mr. Aronson's book is a most useful contribution. Although his writing is here and there tinged with party feeling, his book contains much new and valuable matter. He is one of many men of different points of view who are telling us all is not well with the land, and that it behoves us to heal this sore lest it corrupt the whole body politic.

HENRY BENTINCK.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE Housing question is one of those with which the general public has become familiar in the cry for reform, but that demand has generally been associated with the slums of our towns and cities. In fact the Housing problem in the villages is no whit less serious; but the village hovel does not, from its very charm and quaintness, shock the sense of humanity as does the urban slum. Thus, whilst the ever apparent danger has frightened the Legislature to effective action in the towns, the hidden but no less serious evil has been allowed to grow apace in the villages.

The better housing of the rural labourers has been already too long delayed. The evil conditions that exist, together with the dearth of cottages throughout the countryside, are sapping the very life-blood of the nation. The young people are driven away from the villages of their birth, for they cannot marry and make for themselves a home. They go to the great cities and to the towns, or to the Colonies beyond the seas; year by year, the countryside has been denuded of those it can least afford to spare; the land is mourning her best sons and daughters; the whole nation is suffering from the drain. At last men are beginning to realize that these conditions are a national danger, and a menace to the future of the State. The man in the street is making up his mind that they must not be permitted to endure.

At such a time—when every drop in the ocean of thought which makes for conviction, and every grain in the balance of opinion which makes for action, will be of worth in the search for a solution—any little knowledge possessed, or experience gained, must be thrown into the ocean or placed upon the balance. Many years spent in the life of a village, sights there seen, experience there gained, have enabled me to realize conditions and to estimate results, which are not apparent to others who have not lived the life. To those who have not enjoyed such opportunities to see behind the veil, I specially appeal.

When next you go upon the countryside, look not only upon its beauties, the marvels of a bounteous nature which are around wherever you may go; but look also upon its evils, the misery which man has too often carried in his train. Compare the glorious majesty of Nature with the squalid misery of Man. Then, when you have done these things, you will fully realize the importance of what I write; and, perhaps, one more recruit will be gained to fight the battle that must now be fought on behalf of those whose need is pressing and whose danger great, yet whose voices cannot be raised on their own behalf.

My sincere thanks are due to Mr. R. Reiss and Dr. F. Arnold for valuable criticism and advice; and to Lord Henry Bentinck, M.P., for his permission to use the information in Appendix B.

HUGH ARONSON.

CHIPPERFIELD, *January*, 1913.



## CHAPTER I

### THE VILLAGE. FROM WITHOUT

“Nature is ever young,  
Clad in new riches, as each morning’s gold  
Blooms o’er a blasted land : Be thou consoled.”

—*The Coming of Love* : T. WATTS-DUNTON.

NATURE and Civilization are but too often in these days to be found in opposition, with the result that the beauties of Nature cannot withstand the necessities of Civilization. The activity of modern commercial life leaves little time for the contemplation of the beautiful. Towns have grown up, great manufacturing and mining centres have arisen where the beauties of nature have been thrust aside, and the *necessities* of civilization and commerce reign in their stead. As the coming of the white man heralds the passing of the black, so does the birth of man’s desire but too often proclaim the death of Nature’s glories.

Nature by her very bounty sometimes presages her own swift doom. If she place a seam of coal, a vein of ore, a mine of precious stones, beneath her most resplendent glories, those glories will be swiftly shorn, and the secret hoard extracted. Where all was beauty and peace before, all is now ugliness and clamour. Nature has succumbed to Man ; but as there are oases in the desert, so we still

find places in our land where commerce has not yet left its destructive trail. These places are in the rural villages of England. It is there that Nature still reveals herself in all her beauty to those who care to worship at her shrine; for she is indeed bounteous of her gifts.

Picture one of these villages which lie dotted about the country, little altered to all outward view by the centuries that have passed. Coming up from the railway line, which lies along the valley at its foot, the very train seeming to fume and fret at such delay in its hurry and bustle to the north, the place of life and action, one seems to pass from one world into another. Leaving behind the stress and bustle of the town, here is the haven of repose. The long stiff hill has been climbed and the little hamlet reached which nestles halfway up the northern slope.

Entering the village from the south, on the right is the old church surrounded by its low flint wall, toned to soft greys and greens by the lichens which have clung there, seeking shelter in the unevenness of the stones. The yew trees scattered round the old lych-gate carry back memories to the archers of centuries gone by; to the bows and arrows of Crecy and Poitiers. The background of great elms shuts out all view beyond, and these are the abode of stately cawing rooks by day, of great white haunting owls by night.

On the left stands the village inn, another memory of days that are long since past. A long, low, straggling place, its full overhanging eaves affording cosy residence to many swallows, who fly backwards and forwards all day long, uttering that

curious plaintive cry they make when apparently unable to appease the voracious appetites of their young. Man and Nature have worked well together here to please the eye and soothe the mind. That long, low front, the windows scattered quaintly here and there upon its surface, the low-pitched roof of tiles, are worthy specimens of man's best handicraft. Nature, as if not to be outdone, has lavished her gifts upon the building. The purple clematis in great full clusters climbs along the wall; the ivy clasps the chimneys in a close embrace; whilst the bunch of stonecrop clinging to the roof would seem to vie, in the very coyness of its place, with the patch upon a past fair maiden's cheek.

Time has mellowed the whole to a soft dull tone of red, whilst the winds and rains of many a long winter have given the old place that weather-beaten look which is half its glory.

In the summer the great tiled porch is surrounded by the patriarchs of the village; old men who seem to spend their lives sitting on the rough-hewn benches, sipping as many pints as they can well afford; the pace with which they drink the goodly liquor off varying only with the money they have to spend. They gossip all day to one another and to any passer-by, who would tell them news from the market town, or some little scandal which is going the round, for the love of scandal is not confined to their "betters." In the winter the same group is to be found in the great chimney-piece of the inn parlour, a huge log fire burning on the open hearth; the massive oak beams, black with the smoke of years, bearing their burden for the winter

months: great flitches of home-cured bacon, and various other dainty morsels.

Away beyond, the village green opens before the view. Along either side stretch rows of cottages; some with thatched roofs, others with tiles glittering in the sun.

Look a little closer at these village homes. See this one that stands apart from all its fellows at the near end of the green. It is on a little island of its own; one of those plots of land which once upon a time belonged to the pasture land of the people, but not so very many years ago was quietly fenced in by some wily old squire for his own, and now bears a dwelling upon it. The cottage is narrow and not too high, whilst the steep pitch of its roof gives added lustre to the almost purple tiles which shade away into all colours in the sun. Its walls, what is to be seen of them, are of flints; for the ivy clings so closely and is so thick as almost to conceal the whole surface with its growth; it seems to act as a buttress to the old place, which is not a little bit awry, whilst the tiny lattice windows look like peep-holes in the dark dull green.

At the other end of the village stands one of those odd little structures which once must have warned the traveller of the toll he had to pay. Not square, nor round, a complexity of many angles it seems to be; built so low and cemented so strongly that it looks like a little fortress to ward off the rush of those who might once have tried to cheat the owner of his toll.

Here are two more village homes, very picturesque but rather old and shaky. The honeysuckle and the "traveller's joy" seem to strive in

friendly rivalry for pride of place across the wooden porch ; the roof with funny bulges in its midst half covered by a mass of ivy.

Farther still, down lanes and round corners, where least expected, cottages in ones or twos reveal themselves to the passer's gaze ; some charming in their picturesqueness, others too dilapidated even for that. Returning down the green can be noticed that which had first escaped the eye ; the old village pound, long out of use, its old sides crumbling under the weight of years ; whilst near by are the remnants of the village stocks.

Such is the delightful old village we rush through on our modern contrivances of petrol or of steam. No longer does the hoot of horn awaken the old keeper of the toll-gate to come and let us through ; nor the old inn do aught but retain us for a hurried meal. The life that is lived here is hidden from our view, we catch but glimpses of Nature's beauty as we bustle through in our journey to the world beyond, of city and of town.

From such a picture one may see how Nature has not failed to do her share in making our villages places of beauty throughout the land. If Nature has given of her best to England's villages, can the same be said of Man for his share in the task ? No answer can be given until the village has been seen from a different standpoint. When this view has been taken I leave my readers to proclaim the verdict ; may it not be too severe !

## CHAPTER II

### THE VILLAGE. FROM WITHIN

“When packed in one reeking chamber,  
Man, maid, mother, and little ones lay;  
While the rain pattered in on the rotting bride-bed,  
And the walls let in the day.”

—*The Bad Squire*: C. KINGSLEY.

IN the previous chapter a village of rural England was shown in all its beauty from without. It was seen as Nature would have it be. It remains to consider the village from a very different standpoint. It must be regarded from within the doors of those old cottages, so that one may discover if the comforts and conveniences under those quaint old roofs and within those ivy-covered walls are in accord with the beauty of the exterior. Is all as it should be? Or is the village from within different from what this external view would lead one to suppose?

In a village in the Home Counties the Housing Question has been very carefully considered. To the outward eye all should there be well; Nature has been lavish of her gifts, and many a pretty old cottage lies snuggled away in an unexpected corner. This village is but typical of many throughout the land, no better and no worse. We will look at it carefully, as an object-lesson; it will reveal to our eyes conditions which it is well should be known to exist; and it may teach many lessons for future guidance.

It is some six years ago now that the question of housing was mooted in this hamlet. The existing accommodation was inadequate for the population, and, as a result, the young people were leaving the village. It was therefore proposed that the local Council should build cottages in the village. And it was only when, as a result of this proposal, a report was asked for as to the need of further accommodation, that the real condition of affairs was brought to light.

This report deals with cottages let at three shillings a week and under, of which there were 68 in the village. In discussing the construction of some of these, reference is made to the requirements of the bye-laws, and it is mentioned that cottages may not be erected with rooms less than eight feet in height. "There are in the village many cottages with rooms under seven feet in height, and in one case five feet nine inches. Many cottages are beyond repair. In no cases are there more than two bedrooms, a few having but one—the demoralising effect in some cases being better imagined than described. The sanitary conditions are most unsatisfactory, one closet frequently serving for two cottages, and in some cases for three; in one case sixteen people being compelled to use one closet. The sink waste is frequently thrown by the roadside, no sink being provided."

A little later the Inspector of Nuisances was instructed to report on the same area, and his statement but confirms the one just quoted. "Out of 79 cottages I inspected," he says, ". . . forty-seven are without any system of drainage; the closets are of the type with foul pits . . . there



are also a number without any proper water-supply, having to depend upon rain-water for drinking purposes."

The community is now fully alive to the danger of drinking any but the purest water; surely, then, no surprise is caused when fevers rage in villages where the only water supply depends upon the rain-fall. In a wet year there will be a superfluity, and damp will be the natural result; in a dry year there may be enough to drink, but certainly not enough for washing and cleansing. This water will, moreover, be collected in butts, themselves certainly not over-clean, supplied from gutterings which are never overhauled. Often on a rainy day, during a dry summer, lines of old tin baths may be seen, and any other receptacles which may be at hand, placed outside the cottages to catch every drop of precious water.

There are many hundreds of cottagers in the villages to-day who do not know the blessings of a regular water supply. It may be that the water company has somewhat deprived Nature of her privilege in this matter; but for once Nature must not be wholly relied upon; human ingenuity must be brought to her aid.

The Inspector goes on to state that: "The ground in the rear (of the cottages) which ought to be cultivated is in a foul condition owing to dirty habits of the tenants, who use it as a dumping ground for all kinds of refuse and slop water." There are very many cottages where the gardens cannot be cultivated, for the soil is so hot with buried refuse that nothing can be grown. This is because there is nowhere else for the refuse to be buried; it was



not removed, so the cottagers had to get rid of it as best they could. The Inspector must have prevented them from throwing their slop-water upon the road, for soapy water is a favourite breeding-place of various germs, and is therefore a nuisance. The only place that remained was the garden.

It is not the dirty habits of the tenants which have wrought these evils, it is the terrible conditions which the tenants themselves cannot improve. The condition of the many cottages which have no gardens at all is deplorable indeed.

A few months after this interim report, the Inspector made another. He stated that notices had been served on the owners of thirty-three houses, which "have been put into a better sanitary condition. There are twenty-two cottages where it has not been necessary to serve any notices, these being in a good condition." What must have been the original condition of the village when out of the 55 cottages, which were let at under four shillings a week, thirty-three, or three-fifths, were in such order that notices had to be served on the owners to make them fit for habitation, can readily be conjectured.

Nine months later, the agitation for more cottages continuing, the County Medical Officer of Health was instructed to make a report, and a section of his report dealing with what improvements had already been effected, bears ample testimony to the evils that previously existed.

"Water has been freely laid on," he says, "and there is no doubt that, as a result, . . . the village is now in a better general sanitary condition than is usual elsewhere. But a good deal remains

to be done. In many cases only one privy is provided for two or more cottages; in many privies there is no pail, and the resulting accumulation is liable to cause a nuisance. . . . Where drains to a cesspool are not yet provided, the slops are thrown about and give rise to an insanitary condition."

He then goes on to deal with the general housing conditions in the village:

"The life of a considerable number (of cottages) cannot be more than twenty years. . . . Inadequacy of window area I found very common. I venture also to point out the fact that I found no cottage with more than two bedrooms, and that, although possibly sufficient for children, such provision, both on sanitary and moral grounds, becomes increasingly inadequate as the children grow up. With this prospect most of the cottages I saw would before long afford insufficient accommodation for their present inmates. Such an example was afforded by the house occupied by a labourer . . . where two parents and eight children occupied two bedrooms."

After showing that although the population had increased in the last twenty-five years by twenty-seven persons, and that there were only four more houses at the end of that period than at the beginning, he says: "It is probable that the general population . . . is increasing by four or five every year, even allowing for the natural tendency of young adults towards the towns. As the present accommodation is barely sufficient for the present number of inmates at their present age, and as most of the existing cottages are of considerable

age, it is evident that either new cheap cottages must be built, . . . or that the village must gradually be deprived, by emigration elsewhere, of the younger generation of the labouring classes."

Here, then, is a typical village of rural England; and what has been found? That the sanitary conditions are terrible and conducive to every form of disease; that no proper water-supply exists; that no houses with more than two bedrooms are to be found; that many of the cottages are very old and past repair; whilst there is such a dearth of houses that the younger people are steadily emigrating elsewhere.

After such conditions had been revealed, the local authorities felt that they could not decently let the matter rest, and a local inquiry was held under the provisions of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890, to collect evidence as to—

(1) "Whether the Rural District Council . . . ought to have taken steps for the adoption of Part III of 'The Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890,' or to have exercised their powers under that Part, and have failed to do so;"

(2) "Whether it is desirable for the County Council to resolve that the powers of the Rural District Council . . . for the purposes of Part III . . . shall be transferred to the County Council."

I have the evidence taken before that Committee by me as I write—page after page of it—full of pathos and often of humour; showing in clear and vivid phrase the conditions under which so many of our fellow-creatures live: the discomfort, the misery, and the fear.

An old man of seventy-five years of age, who had lived in the village all his life, was the first witness.

“Do you remember any labourers’ cottages being pulled down?”

“Yes, about thirty and over.”

“Can you remember any cottages being built?”

“Yes. About eight in the room of about thirty pulled down.”

The next witness was a woman.

“Was the cottage that you lived in here a bad one?”

“Very bad indeed.”

“What did you have to do when it rained there?”

“I had to dish the water out of the window all day long, and put clean curtains up.”

“Do you remember two gentlemen coming round?”

“Yes.”

“Did they come to look at your cottage?”

“They came to look at it, but I could not let them go over it because the landlord had just been round.”

“Why could you not let them go over it?”

“The landlord had just come round and said I should have to go out if I did, and there was nowhere else to go.”

Another woman said that she and her husband were forced to live with her parents because she could not find an empty cottage. The father was the same old man who had lived in the village 75 years and told us about the cottages that had been pulled down. He and his wife lived in a tumble-

down cottage that was bad enough for them, but worse by far when his daughter and her husband resided there as well. The old people had turned an outhouse into a residence and mostly lived there, while the younger pair used the cottage.

The witness went on to say that at last she found a home two miles from her native village. Asked where she worked, for the wretched woman earned a few shillings by picking stones off the fields, she referred to a farm in another village.

“Do you walk every day from —?”

“Yes, I have done, and I am doing now.”

“Four miles every day each way?”

“Yes.”

Her husband, it appeared, worked at a farm also four miles from their home, but in exactly the opposite direction to where the wife worked. So that these two people walked sixteen miles between them each day to and from their work.

How could she ever keep the home decent or the children respectable, leaving home early in the morning and returning late at night weary, spiritless, and with hardly sufficient money to keep a roof above their heads!

A farm labourer was next called. He had been living for over a year at his employer's farm as a sort of caretaker; and all this time he had kept on his old cottage, though uninhabited.

“Why was that?”

“Because if we went out we should not have had another cottage to go into.”

“How long dic you pay that rent for?”

“Thirteen months.”

"Did anybody occupy your house during the time you were away?"

"No, we did not give them the chance."

Clear evidence enough of the dearth of cottages; for the man, who was not earning more than sixteen shillings a week, had paid five pounds twelve shillings in rent rather than risk the loss of his cottage.

A woman was then examined who had been forced to leave her cottage for overcrowding, and was then living three miles from her husband's work.

"Was he able to get a cottage in ——?"

"No, he was not."

"How long did he try?"

"Three months."

"Where did he have to go to in the end?"

"He went to ——? We had to get somewhere."

This was the village three miles away.

She was asked as to the cottage she used to live in.

"How many families were there living in that cottage?"

"Two."

"How many bedrooms were there?"

"Only two."

The last villager called was asked these questions:

"You have been married seven years?"

"Yes."

"Did you want a cottage in ——?"

"Yes, I did, but I could not get one."

"For how long did you try to get one?"

"Five years."

“Why could you not get one?”

“Because there was not one vacant.”

“Did you apply for several?”

“Yes.”

“Were they all taken before you?”

“Yes, there were three before me.”

“You could not get in anywhere?”

“No, I could not.”

There was always, apparently, a great race for any empty cottage; she always entered, but unfortunately she was not swift of foot, and therefore did not come in first for five long years.

This was some of the evidence given by the cottagers themselves. And when it is remembered that a very great number would not attend to make their voices heard for very fear, it will at once be realised how important was the evidence given by those who bravely came, and how overwhelming in its proof of evil would have been the voice of the whole village had it but dared to speak.

Consider now some of the evidence given by other witnesses—expert evidence, and that of others besides the inhabitants of the cottages themselves.

An old gentleman, ninety years of age, the patriarch of the village, one beloved by all for his goodness and his cheerfulness, was asked his opinion of the cottages.

“As bad as bad can be—not all, of course. I would not put my pigs into some of them.”

“Are more cottages wanted?”

“I consider them absolutely necessary.”

“Are the present ones overcrowded?”

“Some of them.”

“What do you think that leads to?”

“It leads to everything—immorality. It appears to me that unless something is done it will destroy the manhood of England. Overcrowding must end in immorality. I have thought so for many years.”

“Do you know that there is any difficulty in getting them (the cottagers) to come and give evidence to-night?”

“They are very much afraid. I have again and again talked, and they said, ‘Don’t say a word—don’t tell.’ They have never refused to let me in, because I should insist on going.”

A local doctor gave his opinion of the cottages:

“In several houses I think they ought to be put into a better sanitary state of repair. Some of them I go into seem to be very good, but others are very poor indeed.”

“Are they overcrowded?”

“Some of them that I have been into are, decidedly.”

“Do you think that these insanitary cottages make the people unhealthy who live in them?”

“Yes, decidedly so.”

A Parish Councillor, who had taken a leading part in bringing the whole question forward, stated: “I found that the conditions of many of the houses were bad, but what I was more impressed with than anything else was the absolute dearth of cottages. I found many a young man could not get married because of the want of houses, and that young labourers were leaving the village by reason of that dearth.” Referring to the occupant of a certain cottage, this witness stated that “he lived in a cottage so bad that he had to put up an umbrella to keep off the rain when in bed at night. The



same cottage is now occupied, and although the rent then was two shillings and sixpence a week it is now three shillings, and the man who now occupies it will come forward and prove this statement, and that he has to move his bed from side to side whenever it rains in order to avoid the rain."

"Is there reasonable accommodation for people there, and can they get reasonable houses of the class they want?"

"It is absolutely impossible; that is to say for a labourer earning fifteen shillings to £1 a week."

"Assuming that every house in the place is sanitary and proper, are there enough?"

"By no means. Men constantly have to leave and cannot get houses, and overcrowding is the natural result of the want. Assuming all the houses are all sanitary (which you have heard they are not), there is still overcrowding, and the iniquity of the whole thing is this, that notices are served on people calling upon them to desist from overcrowding, and they have nowhere else to turn to. . . . The rents perpetually rise because there is an awful demand; . . . the persistent rise in rental is a proof that there is a dearth, otherwise these houses, which you will hear are very bad, would naturally fall in value and not rise. . . . Here is a contention that there is no want of cottages, and yet we have a persistent increase in rent. . . . In almost every . . . instance the rents have increased from twenty per cent. to thirty per cent. I ask why is it, if there is a supply, that these rents have gone up?"

In cross-examination, the same witness referred to an inquest held recently in the village, and stated

that "It will be proved in evidence . . . that in that cottage there were two bedrooms occupied by three grown men, and in one living room there lived a woman and her daughter with an illegitimate child, and the man who committed suicide."

The next witness was also a member of the Parish Council; the largest ratepayer in the district, and a man who had himself made a report on the cottages. In reply to a general question on the condition, he stated that "The chief impression on my mind was the one great difficulty of getting information, because the people were afraid of telling us anything. In one or two cases they refused to admit us into the cottages at all, and we had very little difficulty in seeing that there was a very great dearth of cottages there. . . . The chief impression on my mind when I came away was the want of cottages."

"You said people seemed afraid of something. What were they afraid of?"

"They were afraid to give me information because they were afraid they would get into trouble with their landlords if they did so, and that is a strong argument with me in saying that there were not sufficient cottages, because, if a man knew he could get another cottage if he was turned out of his present one, they would not be so frightened to give evidence."

An architect, who had inspected a considerable number of these cottages, was thus questioned:

"Generally speaking, what do you say about the houses?"

"I found a large proportion of cottages, in my

opinion, unfit for habitation, and they ought to be pulled down."

"What about the sanitary arrangements, are they, generally speaking, satisfactory or unsatisfactory?"

"They are very unsatisfactory indeed."

"Did there appear to be a reasonable amount of cottages there for the working classes that were fit for habitation?"

"No, certainly not."

"A number of the houses are very old, and the Rural District Council say themselves it is impossible to get them up to modern requirements?"

"Quite impossible, because many of the floors are under the level of the ground, and the ceilings are only six feet or seven feet high."

"These places which you say are not fit for human habitation according to modern ideas, are all full of people?"

"Yes."

"Does that show in your view that there is not a sufficient supply, because, if there was a reasonable supply, do you think people would live in these houses?"

"They would not be occupied certainly."

"Did a woman yesterday refuse to admit you?"

"Yes."

"What reason did she give?"

"She said that after she had admitted Mr. — and Mr. — her landlord came and made such a terrible row, and threatened to turn her out if she did it again."

This witness was then cross-examined.

"You say the sanitary arrangements of the exist-

ing cottages are unsatisfactory. Can you tell me in what way?"

"In very many ways. The ceilings are very low and the floors are under the level of the ground; the walls are thoroughly damp, and the papers rot on the walls and drop off."

"Are there any houses you consider in such an insanitary condition that they are not fit for human habitation?"

"There are a great many."

"In your opinion is it possible in the case of a number of houses in this parish to bring them up to a state of decency for poor people?"

"They are in a very shocking condition certainly. In one case, instead of having an area of one-tenth of the floor space, they only have one-twenty-eighth."

"Do you consider that there are enough cottages there for the present population?"

"No, I do not. . . . There are many uninhabitable cottages inhabited."

The Sanitary Inspector for the district was then called.

"Is it not a fact that . . . the cottages were full, and if anybody made complaints out they went?"

"I do not say out they go. They would either have to pay the extra rent or out they go *probably*."

"If a young man out of one of those cottages wanted to marry a young woman in that parish was there a cottage of any kind suitable for people at fifteen shillings a week, in which they could live, which was not already full of people?"

"I did not find one to let."

"The report states in one place there are sixteen people who are compelled to use one closet?"

"There were sixteen people, but there was an old man of 54 and a young child of fifteen months. But that was a bad case, I admit."

"Do you find this place much worse than other small villages?"

"No, I think there is a little in its favour."

"What?"

"I know villages that are worse."

The third, and last, expert witness was the Medical Officer of Health for the district.

"Is there one bedroom that you came across which is only five feet seven inches high?"

"I daresay that is so."

"That would not be much good for a man who was over five feet seven inches?"

"*Not if he had to stand up.* If he was lying down it would be all right."

"If a young man and a young woman wanted to marry could you see anywhere where they could go?"

"Not if they wanted to stop there."

The evidence of this medical witness is truly remarkable. A bedroom under six foot high is all right because, of course, you never want to stand up in it, you only sleep there, and when you are asleep it really does not matter. It is quite simple to walk about on your knees, and if you should want to dress what easier than to take your clothes down into the living room below?

Young people are unable to get married because they cannot find a cottage; apparently they need not stop, they can go away. But it is stated that

there are no other cottages to let within five or six miles of the village; well, then, they can go further still; they will lose their work and perhaps drift into the towns. This, it would appear, also cannot be helped.

So ended the Inquiry. And thus were the true conditions brought to light. No one can read these extracts without feeling that the conditions there revealed are such as cannot be endured in a country at the height of its civilization, its power and its glory.

Cottages full to overflowing, with the rain coming through roof and walls; with terrible sanitary provisions; condemned by experts as uninhabitable; with bedrooms it is impossible to stand up in; with no gardens; no back exits of any kind. Women waiting for cottages for many years, forced to live in desperation four miles from their work. Other women terrorised by their landlords if they dare to utter one word of complaint; their rents arbitrarily raised or they are told to go. Finally, the Sanitary Inspector himself declares that he knows villages where the conditions are even worse. It is an extraordinary fact, but nevertheless true, that the local authority gave this as the very reason for their refusal to act. These conditions are but typical, they said, and if action is taken here it will be necessary to do just the same in other villages in the area. Many villages are quite as bad and many are even worse. Therefore it was decided to do nothing.

We have seen the appearance of a village without; we have seen the conditions within. The contrast is indeed vivid. It is pitiful to realise

that whilst such beauty and happiness are to be found without and all around the homes of the village labourers, such ugliness and misery lurk within these very homes themselves.

Further examples of such conditions need not be taken, for they can be multiplied by reference to almost every village in the land. Rather it must be considered where all this is leading and what the results at present are and will continue long to be until some drastic remedy is applied.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EFFECTS OF BAD HOUSING : RURAL DEPOPULATION

“Oh—you queens—you queens! among the hills and happy greenwood of this land of yours, shall the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; and in your cities, shall the stones cry out against you, that they are the only pillows where the Son of Man can lay His head?”

—*Of Queen's Gardens*: RUSKIN.

THE lack of cottages in the villages, and the shocking condition of many of those that do exist, is undoubtedly the chief cause of rural depopulation. The population in the village just described rose from 508 in 1901 to 520 in 1906, an increase of but twelve in six years; whilst in the whole rural district the population fell from 6,127 in 1891 to 6,012 in 1901—a decline of 115 in ten years, or 18.2 per thousand. In several counties there has been a serious fall in population during the last twenty years:\* whilst such counties as Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire and Cornwall show no practical increase whatsoever.

*County.	Population in 1891.	Population in 1911.	Decrease.
Cumberland .....	266,550	265,780	770
Herefordshire .....	113,391	113,088	303
Huntingdon .....	50,290	48,105	2,185
Rutland .....	22,123	21,168	955
Somerset .....	510,064	491,320	18,744
Westmorland .....	66,215	63,575	2,640
	<hr/> 1,028,633	<hr/> 1,003,036	<hr/> 25,597



If the figures are taken for the whole of England and Wales it will be seen that the population has increased by 19.6, whereas that of the six counties mentioned has decreased by 2.55 in the same period (1891-1911).

It is well to consider the effect of this movement both on the countryman and the town-dweller. Those who live in towns are apt to consider agricultural labourers as men of little brain, of small capacity for thought and action; as altogether inferior to the town artisan in all their mental attributes. Just as the labourers in our villages would regard the great industry of shipbuilding as one operation, and would not realise that it is the result of many minor industries, each an art in itself, each employing a different type of man, so the town-dweller looks upon the greatest of all industries, that of agriculture. He thinks that an agricultural labourer is one who works upon the land, who tills and sows and reaps, and does all things necessary for the cultivation of the soil. But here he greatly errs, for the industry of agriculture is not so very much less highly specialised than that of shipbuilding, or any manufacturing industry. It is quite true that on small farms one or two general men may be employed; and a wonderful combination of practical knowledge such a man often is; but even here specialised help is called in at different seasons. On the larger farms, where agriculture is scientifically pursued, the work is properly distributed in its various sections, and the country villages of England are full of specialists in the various branches of their trade.

Watch the ploughman at his work in late autumn

and early spring. Or put a man whose life-work it has not been to drive a straight, clean furrow and see how helpless he will be. With little but a distant hedge or stake to guide him the expert will never fail to keep to the straight and even line. So highly trained is this workman that the ploughman is one of the best paid workers on the farm.

Go along the lanes in winter and watch the hedger plying his craft. See this man with bagenhook or chopper in one hand, grasping the straggling boughs and shoots in the thick gauntlet he wears upon the other. See how quickly and how neatly he transforms a wilderness of briar and bramble into a good and shapely hedge; or watch him with heathers and with stakes building up a strong new hedge where there was little before. Pass through the meadows in the middle summer months when the hay is cleared and stacked, and the thatcher is at his work; and realize that nothing but constant practice can train a man for such work. With a pair of shears, a few pegs and a ball of twine, he will soon construct a perfect roof of straw. Put a ploughman or a hedger to do this work, or any one who has not made himself competent by persistent practice, and it will soon be seen that the call for skilled workmen is not confined to the towns. The stack on which the thatcher has wrought with all his skill will be erect and neat and trim, with quaint-shaped ornaments of straw upon the ends. The handiwork of the other will be neither shapely nor proof against the weather.

There are men upon the land who do nothing but go around to cut the hay in stack and bind it, and men who earn their livelihood by the art of wood-

cutting alone; for a woodman must understand the nature of the tree and sap before he can become an expert at this trade. All trees must be cut in their due season, and the season of the one will not be the season of the other. The oak must only be felled in the spring time of the year when the sap has risen, or the bark is useless and valueless for sale. There are men who earn their wage by laying soot upon the cornlands in the early spring, for not every man can throw soot as it should be thrown; and there are men who do nothing else but tend and milk the cows upon the farm.

What an expert is the shepherd—that cheery old man who is always to be met wandering with his trusty dog. This man knows the sheep that form his flock from one another. To a layman the face of one sheep is as the face of any other; but this is not so to the man who has spent his life amongst them. Watch him on a hot summer's day routing them out from pleasant slumber after a great fat meal; he knows that, if they lie too long, they may never rise again. See him catch hold of some fine old ram; this shepherd knows by the twitching of its tail that the tick is there, and must be quickly slain, or the ram may soon be dead.

Take any of these "experts" in the various branches of a great industry and transplant them to the town. What are these men to do? There are no fields to plough, no hedges to make, no stacks to thatch, no hay to bind, no trees to fell, no soot to lay, no cows to mind, no sheep to tend, in the streets and alleys of great towns. Whatever expert knowledge they may possess is of no value to them there—they know no trade which can

employ them in the urban areas of the land. "By one route or another they have come to be casual labourers . . . cast out on the river bank by an economic tide from the land."\*

This is the terrible thing which is happening every day. Men, young and strong, go from the villages because, forsooth, no work can be found for them there! Because not even a decent home can be offered to these men for whom the thousands of acres of our untilled land are crying aloud; men who want but the smallest inducement to remain in the villages of their birth. They go to the towns, where whole districts by the river bank are full of countrymen once plying an art, now standing daily without the dockyard gate, "The shuffling figures that throng the wharves each early morning."\* Work may be plentiful or it may be scarce, but it is never regular; one week a man may earn twenty-eight shillings, and for the next fortnight nothing will come his way at all. For such work strength and endurance alone are asked; in the casual market character is of no account.

Thus slowly and steadily the man deteriorates. He misses the fresh air and regular work of his country toil; he mixes with those who have preceded him in the downward path and there is no longer any hope. Lower and lower must he sink, until his life is utterly valueless to the community; mere flotsam and jetsam upon the sluggish stream of human existence which flows up and down the banks of Mother Thames.

Men, whose labour was productive, whose work was skilled, are thus being driven to become unpro-

\*Alexander Paterson: *Across the Bridges*.

ductive and unskilled labourers on the one hand, or, on the other, are displacing town-workers who were there formerly employed. Surely the town itself is considerably the loser by this steady immigration. The wages of casual labour are low enough already, there is no need for an increased supply. Rather the demand steadily decreases, as mechanical power ousts human effort. The greater the influx into the towns the lower will sink the wages of those who were there before. The margin of existence will rapidly decline. Bad and insufficient housing in the villages reacts on the housing conditions of the towns. The man who comes upon the casual market will also become a dweller in the slums, making still worse the evil conditions that already exist, and raising the rent of these insanitary and overcrowded dwellings against the earlier occupiers and himself as well. He is not used to these conditions. For even if the cottage-home of his native village were as insanitary and overcrowded as the two-roomed tenement he now inhabits, there was always the fresh pure air to counteract these evils. This influence is now gone, and so his health is sure to deteriorate steadily. He will, probably before many years are past, come upon the poor-law for assistance, and thus become a further burden upon the district of his adoption. Thus the vicious circle never ceases to revolve. His forced pilgrimage is pure loss to the country which he has left, and small gain to the town to which he has come.

What about this man's family? He may have been married before he came to the town, or he may have married since. His little children, who

should have played on the village green, are now playing in the streets of a wretched slum. There is no counteracting influence here to place against the evils. So it is that instead of growing up with a chance of strength and health, they have every prospect of becoming sickly or stunted from their youth. Instead of being the sons of an agricultural craftsman, they are the sons of a casual labourer, and what but casual labourers can they hope to be themselves?

There are many evils attaching to economic life which may be largely mitigated, but are to a great degree inseparable from life as it is now lived; but these evils are not inseparable from life, and this only makes the fact of their existence ten times more deplorable.

There may be in certain industries a superfluity of toilers, or a decreased demand for goods, and thus a lessened output, which will mean a smaller demand for labour. But in agriculture this is not so; the demand for labour is fairly steady and fluctuates little. There is usually a greater demand than there is supply of labour, and in the summer thousands of Irish harvesters and hoppers come across the Channel and earn good wages during the few months that they remain. The villagers seldom leave the country because there is no work for them to do, but because there is nowhere for them to live.

The better the education that village children receive the greater will the rural depopulation become unless at the same time attention is paid to the housing conditions in these villages. The children who are now being turned out of the vill-

age schools are of a very different class from those of a few years back. They are being taught the advantages of hygiene. In the school curriculum itself they are shown the results of carelessness and neglect; in the cooking lesson the girls are urged, before all else, to attend to the cleanliness of the utensils they employ. These children are being shown by the medical inspection of the school doctor how the State considers the good health of its young citizens. Such ideas are becoming part of their daily life.

These children return home from school. They see the cottage dirty and untidy, cold and damp; they lie in bed huddled close together in a stifling nauseous atmosphere; their food is badly cooked, the things they use are black and greasy. It is then that they compare the lessons of the school with the realities of the home. Can it be wondered at that their first desire is to leave that home as early as may be and seek a better life elsewhere?

The State is not justified in persistently raising the standard of the school whilst doing nothing to raise the standard of the home. It is not right to the parents nor to the children. Such things make the children discontented with their homes, and make them look with disparagement upon their parents, the followers of the old régime; whilst neither parents nor children are given the opportunity of rising to the new standards which have been set up for the younger generation to follow.

It is curious how the nation, as a whole, has utterly failed, and still fails, to recognize the real seriousness of the steady rise in the number of persons who emigrate each year. In the last twenty



years over 4,600,000 have left these islands; and in 1910 the number was double what it was in 1900.\* A vast proportion of these emigrants are men who, often with their families, have gone from the villages to till the soil in the Colonies or other lands.

From a little village close to my own home, some thirty men, women and children, sailed last summer for Canada; the men to be farm labourers; the women, their wives and daughters, even their sweethearts, to help them or enter domestic service there; the children to grow up citizens of another land. These thirty were not such as the village could well afford to spare; they were not the lazy nor the incapable, they were some of the keenest workers and some of the most capable in that little place. It is always so with emigration. It is the best who go, the ones that should be retained; those who will make the finest citizens, who will be the most valuable assets to the State.

From my native village three of our most energetic young men have also gone to Canada of late. These men went because there was no chance for them to make a home in the village of their birth. They would soon have come to the age at which they would desire to marry and settle down, for the agricultural labourers marry very young. They knew that if they did this they would almost certainly have been unable to find an empty cottage, so the prospect of an unsettled future has driven them away.

\*Number of Emigrants from the British Isles.

1890	1900	1910
218,116	168,825	397,848



How much is spent each year in the education of little children—an education which will make many of them only too anxious to quit the land which, by the very lessons it has taught, has shown them how hopeless and how black is the prospect of the future.

The child in the village school will cost the nation some £30 for its education—the State has spent £900 in a tiny village alone on those who have left our shores within the period of one short year.

How much treasure is spent in giving an education to children who, as soon as they have arrived at man's estate, will leave to become citizens of a far-off land. It is at the very moment when the burden of expenditure will cease, when the child will become of value to his country, when the capital is about to pay its first instalment of interest to the credit of the State—it is at this moment that the State relinquishes what it should retain; that it offers as a free gift to others the finished product—the man, which it has had all the trouble and expense of moulding out of the raw material—the child.

Not only does the nation look quietly on whilst thus bleeding at the arteries, but assists in keeping open the deadly wound, and sending its best sons and daughters beyond the seas.

In every village will be found two State institutions—the School and the Post Office; the former continuously striving to turn out good and able citizens, the latter advertising every inducement to these young men and women to leave the service of their motherland and go abroad. In the village Post Office can be seen a large poster upon the

wall; issued by the Canadian Government and intended to attract emigrants to that land. The letterpress tells how cheap passages can be obtained, and how free land is granted to suitable applicants. For Canada does not want England's leavings, but her best sons and daughters. The centre of the poster is pictorial. It presents the charming picture of a fair young girl, in the full bloom of health and vigour, mounted upon a thick-set cob, her hair floating on the breeze; full of happiness and joy. There is no shyness in those large brown eyes, but a knowledge of what splendid health and unfettered freedom truly means. All around her to the far horizon stretches the vast unhedged plain with its burden of full ripe grain, where the reapers and the binders are at work gathering in the fruitful harvest. In the far corner lies the homestead, long and low, its roof shining in the sun. The girl on the cob seems to say: "All this, and more, may be yours if you will only come and join us in this happy land. My father was as yours in England in the days gone by; your daughters shall be as I am if you will come, as my father came, to the land of hope and plenty."

This is the alluring vision. Need one be surprised that so many young men gladly answer the fair maiden's call? They would indeed be foolish were they to remain at home with such inducements, such opportunities before them. For how many a man has gone from the Motherland with little of his own and soon risen to a good position in the country of his adoption. They compare the certainties of home with the possibilities abroad—the cottages they now live in with the homesteads

that are presented to their gaze—the starved and ill-cultivated fields of England with the virgin soil and rolling prairies of the Colony.

When once the value of these lives is fully realized, when it is recognized that it is social conditions and not desire that make so many anxious to get away, surely this will all be changed. No longer will assistance be given to those who wish to emigrate, but every inducement held out to them to remain at home. There is little doubt that if a score of decent homes were erected in every village of the land, the figures of emigration would rapidly decline. It may be said that even if the housing conditions in our villages are made better than to-day; if a score of new cottages are built in every place, the tendency of the young to leave will not be stopped, for there is little to attract them in a quiet village of rural England. It may be said that no man who is worth his salt will remain where there is little prospect of his rising to a position of independence, in a life where he is always “man” and never can be “master,” in a vocation in which it has been but too often true that he “follows the plough to the workhouse door.”

There is much truth in this; and, if village life were to remain as it has been for many a long year past, better cottages alone might not retain the labourers upon the land. But this question of rural housing, although it is one of the most urgent problems which calls for attention, is not an end in itself. It is part of a vast and far-reaching scheme of Rural Development which is now slowly but surely taking shape.

The great and primary industry of agrioulture

has been overshadowed ever since the Industrial Revolution brought about the vast growth of manufactures in this country. At last the reverse movement of the pendulum has begun, and the country is awakening to the fact that it must not neglect the one industry as old as the history of man.

It is now, when this truth is clearly seen, that the dearth of cottages is fully felt. For when an attempt is made to revive the industry, it becomes apparent that there is nowhere to house the workers.

Since the Small Holdings Act of 1908 has become law people have often asked me if they could get land near my own village; and then has come the further question: "Of course I can get a cottage?" What must the reply be? "That is quite impossible; there is not a cottage to be let, nor the remotest chance of one being vacant there." So that when an attempt is being made to put other schemes for rural development into operation the same difficulty is again in evidence. Once more it is seen how bad housing lies at the root of our rural ills.

Since the passing of the Small Holdings Act a great change has come over life in some English villages.\* A spirit of hope, of endeavour, has been nourished, where before no such spirit existed. Men in my own village have often said to me in the years gone by: "Ah, if I could get a bit of land, sir, it would make a difference, that it would." For

\*It is unfortunately true that this spirit has, however, in many cases been terribly disappointed by the administration of the Act; and hope, instead of being nourished, has been killed.

these men know what the land will yield, how the earth will return tenfold the little care man may bestow upon her. Go into the allotments in any village you may choose and calculate the wealth; see how every few poles of land are full to overflowing. Then go upon the fields beyond, part of that great half cultivated farm, and mark the difference.

But up to now it has always ended with the five or ten poles in the "Allotment field." If the labourer were fortunate he might get this little plot to call his own; but at a high rent, and on a very precarious tenure. There was no further prospect for him, however; he could never hope to get his twenty poles, or his acre, or even more. Such happiness was to him one of the things to dream of, one of the delights of a "Never, Never Land." So there was little to bind him to his native heath, and if he were strong and keen and loved his independence he went away.

It was one of the most pitiful things to see the attitude of many of these men after the Small Holdings Act became law. One would go and tell them that now they could get land of their own to till, the hope that they had often expressed before was about to be fulfilled. They were at first openly incredulous. "No, sir, we've heard that afore," or, "I thinks as how you're mistaken, sir." This was all they would say; and it was impossible to get many of them to apply for land at all in those early days. They had become so thoroughly inured to their lot, so convinced that nothing could change their lives, that they would not believe that their desire could possibly be fulfilled. And of all evils

that can befall a nation this condition of lethargy is the most terrible and most dangerous. This lethargy had been brought about by the conditions under which they lived. The utter stagnation, the utter hopelessness, had resulted in a refusal to believe that the future held out any possible change for them.

At last a glimmer of the truth began to enter ; a realization that the possibilities outlined were not merely myths and phantasies of idle brains, but really did exist. The change is splendid to behold. It is like the growth of children into men. At first slowly and with doubt and fear they grope their way, still hardly daring to trust what they cannot yet believe. Then the awakening comes at last, and their happiness and joy are boundless. There is a little plot of ground I know, only some fifteen acres in all, where the hopes just described are being realized to the full. On that land some thirty men hold various plots, from the allotment of fifteen poles to the small holding of some four acres ; and the fifteen pole man looks forward happily to the day when he will be the proud holder of his acres ; when he will milk his cows, and feed his pigs—his very own and not his master's ; when he may possess a greenhouse like the one his luckier neighbour built, and grow his own vegetables and flowers for sale. These men have no thoughts now of emigrating to the Colonies or towns ; because there lies before them the prospect of better things.

But do not think that such men as these will endure for long the conditions under which many of them now live. They are becoming better, more

independent, men ; and they will realize more and more the evils of bad housing. So to retain this new strong life upon the countryside, their homes must not be forgotten. Further than this—There is many a man who, having left his native village some short time back, would now gladly return to take some land of his own to till ; better for him ; better for the community would it be if he could come and practice his handicraft ; but there is nowhere for him to live, he can find no roof to shelter him near his work. So he remains away, and many of those are lost who would make the best small holders.

Thus the more carefully this question is investigated, the more clearly will it be realized, how intimately the housing problem is bound up with the whole future of rural development. The Small Holdings Act cannot be successfully worked unless more cottages are built. The depopulation of the villages cannot be stayed by any other means.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE EFFECTS OF BAD HOUSING ON HEALTH

“Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;  
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.”

—*The Deserted Village*: OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

It will have been clear from the reports and evidence which have been quoted, if not from the reader's own observations, that the sanitary condition of many of our cottages is as bad as bad can be; and no one can fail to realize how inimical to health such conditions are. It is indeed a matter for wonder how few are the really dangerous epidemics which rage in the villages under conditions such as these. Many villages are, however, seldom as free from sickness as they should be. Colds and coughs abound, whilst not a year passes without cases of scarlet fever or an outbreak of measles.

It is impossible for people to be healthy who live in a cottage where the “wall of the back bedroom is three inches thick and wet; and where the front room (downstairs) is five feet eight inches high.” The proper thickness for an outer wall of a cottage is nine inches, and it can well be imagined how cold



and damp a bedroom must be which has only one-third of this as a buttress against the wind and weather. The odds are tremendously against any baby being strong and healthy, or even living at all, when born in such a room as this.

I have seen this downstairs room—but five feet eight inches in height—when the labourer's wife was doing her washing in a tub; the steam around her head, for it could not rise, enveloping her as in a mist. Not long ago this poor woman died, a victim to consumption. What else could one expect?

There is another cottage, where there are "four and a half inch walls upstairs . . . damp. Bedroom 800 cubic feet for two parents and three children, requiring a minimum of 1,250. Windows five feet seven and a half inches in square measure, about one-thirtieth instead of the required one-tenth of floor space." In this dwelling five people slept in one room which contained just two-thirds of the air space which it was deemed right for them to live in, whilst the windows were absurdly small. Is it to be wondered at that these children were unhealthy?\*

Another cottage is thus described—"Draughty, and wet comes through doors and windows. Four and a half inch wall upstairs. Cracks in walls, and downstairs walls are damp. Front room six feet six inches high, ceiling bulges badly. Upstairs bedroom window four and a half feet square; one-thirty-sixth instead of the minimum one-tenth of floor space required. . . . Privy pail full up and contents

\*"Overcrowding in unhealthy dwellings is one of the main causes of drink and vice, and reformation in such an environment is impossible."—Sir John Gorst: *The Children of the Nation*.

thrown anywhere, in absence of cesspool." This cottage is still inhabited, and even if repairs have been effected, the structural evils still exist. No man or woman could remain strong and healthy in surroundings such as these.

I know of cottages where consumption is always to be found. Generation after generation comes and falls a victim to this foul scourge. It cannot be otherwise; for in the damp and dirty walls the germ finds a congenial resting-place and will not be denied. It is such surroundings which cause the thousands of deaths each year from consumption.

"The well-to-do need never have consumption unless infected by the poor," says Sir William Broadbent. This is one of the heavy penalties we pay for our selfishness and neglect; thinking that, so long as we ourselves live in comfort and in cleanliness, there is no fear. We are amazed when one we know and love is struck down by this fell scourge. It is well that the lesson be taken to heart before it is too late—the lesson that it is not sufficient to clothe ourselves in plenty and in luxury to escape the dire avenger. We must heal the sick and tend the ailing, and give help to those who cannot help themselves. Then if we do these things, if we extend the helping hand to these our brothers, the return for such assistance will be quick and sure. For in the health of our weaker brethren lies our own; whilst in their sickness will be found the seed of all from which we suffer.\*

Another serious result of these bad conditions is

\*"The exceedingly high death-rate from this disease (tuberculosis) in the counties bordering the Welsh coast has been a subject which has attracted a great deal of attention. . . . This to a considerable extent can be accounted for by the insanitary housing conditions which are prevalent."—Dr. Parry Edwards, Medical Officer of Health, 1910.

the periodical closing of the village schools for minor epidemics. In my native village the schools are sometimes closed for weeks, because half the children are away with coughs and colds. These schools have been closed six times on account of epidemics and illness during the last twelve years; involving a loss of seventeen weeks for teaching. In the next village a few months ago, there were over 300 cases of measles out of a population of about 1,600; and the schools were closed for a long period. These are examples of what exists throughout the land.

I will not consider these things in the light of what is right and just, though here alone the case is truly damning; but will try and show the economic loss to the nation which is resulting, and has long resulted, from these evils.

Start with the assumption that every human being is a valuable asset to the State. A nation depends for its existence upon its men and women; its prosperity, its power, fluctuates as the prosperity, the power, of its individual citizens fluctuates; and the prosperity, the power, of every individual fluctuates with his physical condition. Therefore the prosperity and power of a nation will only last so long as its population consists of healthy men and women.

A nation may conceal for long periods the cancer at its heart. But such a concealment will not last. It is necessary to go back to the centuries before Christ to find this true theory of physical fitness really understood. Ever since then, to within the last few decades, the vital importance of it all lay quite forgotten.

It was in that wonderful pre-Christian entity, the City State of Greece, that the real necessity of health to the nation was fully realized. "Man was a whole to the Hellenes, and one part of him could not be sound if the other parts were not. A national school which trained the minds only and neglected the bodies of the pupils would have been inconceivable to a Hellene."\*

The "Politics" of Aristotle clearly shows what great importance this philosopher-statesman attached to physical as well as mental training. A good citizen cannot be produced if either his mind or his health is neglected the one for the other. There must be a perfect balance of the two to produce the perfect man. Thus at the early age of about seven the Spartan boy was taken from his home to be physically and mentally trained by the State for his functions of citizenship—for citizenship meant far more to the early nations of the world than it does to nations at the present day. If he survived he became a good and strong man and laboured for his State. If he were weak, or if the child were but a girl, exposure might take place; there was no room in the City State for the weak and useless; a crude and terrible procedure, but after all the Greek realized the true need of health, a thing which modern nations have often failed to do.

This theory of Aristotle is equally applicable to-day; the action will differ, but this matters not so long as the lesson is taken from the great men of over 2,000 years ago; for modern civilization can improve upon them. What was the theory of the

\*K. T. Freeman: *The Schools of Hellas*.

Greeks? Surely they reasoned thus—"To live we must fight, we must be mobile, quick of foot and clear of eye; strong to endure fatigue and hardship; we must not be burdened with the sick and weakly or we shall fall. Therefore we must do all we can to make our people strong and healthy."

What should be the theory of to-day? Surely there is little change—"To live we must work and perhaps fight; to work we must be strong, quick of brain and clear of eye; we must be able to endure the heat of the furnace and the forge, the toils and terrors of the mine; we must not be burdened with the sick and weakly, or they will handicap us in the strife and toil of life. Therefore we must do all we can to make our people strong and healthy."

Medical experts tell us that if at the same moment two infants are born—the one in the palace of a king, the other in the hovel of a peasant—at that moment there is little of inherent disease in either of them.\* Or, in another way: That if both infants are placed in identical surroundings and identical treatment is administered to both there will be little physical difference between the king's son and the peasant's in the years to come.

If this is so, how is it that the king's son lives whilst the peasant's son dies? Why is it that the death-rate amongst the children of the slums is far

\*"Medical testimony assures us that 90 per cent. of the children born are at their birth fairly healthy and well nourished. When they come into the world the children of the rich are in their bodies little better than those of the poor. Hereditary disease, chiefly syphilis and alcoholism, are equally spread over all classes. Poverty and privation during gestation seems to affect the mother more than the child. . . . But from the moment of birth deterioration sets in."—Sir John Gorst: *The Children of the Nation*.

greater than the death-rate amongst the children of the mansions?\*

The answer to this is clear. The cause is environment.

The king's son will be nurtured with all care and tenderness. Nurses will be in attendance and nothing be missing to tend that young life. No draughts or cold will be allowed to enter the room where he lies; it will be warmed in winter, cooled in summer. The Child will assuredly live.

The peasant's son will be nurtured with what care and tenderness the poor mother can afford to spare. There may be other infants there, or little children toddling to and from the school, and they must also receive their share of motherhood. No nurses will be at hand to help the harassed woman. The room where the infant lies may be such as I have described, and often seen; in the winter full of draughts and icy cold; in the summer stifling with the heat, for the window may not open. The Child will most likely die.

The life of the king's son, the life of the peasant's son, are both of value to the State; as is every life. And at the beginning there is surely little difference between their values; Nature has moulded all alike; whatever difference there may be is the result of man's endeavour.

Follow this peasant's son in his later years, if he still lives. It is in his youth that the child is most apt to fall a victim to disease. He is not yet strong

\*"A high death-rate of infants is an indication of evil conditions in the homes of the people . . . and . . . almost necessarily denotes a prevalence of those causes and conditions, which in the long run determine a degeneration of race."—Sir John Simon, Medical Officer to the Local Government Board.

enough to resist the germs around. During these childhood's days he is living in surroundings which will not make him the better able to fight against these dangers. Sleeping, with three or four other children, in the same small room, most probably in the same small bed, he is not being given much chance to grow up a strong and healthy man. By the time he has left school he will most probably be physically unsound—that is, he would be unable to pass any medical examination for the army or any kindred service.\*

Follow this boy when he has left the village school; when he goes forth to earn his daily bread upon the land. He is a man now, where will he live? In the same room where he slept as a school-boy he will sleep now, for there is none other. If he gets married he will live in a cottage of his own, if he can find one. If not he and his young wife may live with either parents, and then the conditions will be appalling. Supposing that he gets a home of his own, it will probably be no better than his father's cottage was before, for he can afford no higher rent. Then children come to these two and the same old tale is once more told. Only each generation must become weaker. At last he will be found; an old man by the roadside—his back bent double by the toil of years, and the rheumatic conditions of his living. "A damp cottage put me upon the rates twenty years afore my time," remarked an old man one day. The child at school has come to be an old man upon the rates, and often twenty years too soon.

\*At the present time there are 60,000 children in our Elementary Schools alone suffering from various forms of tuberculosis.



If this child had not been huddled in damp and insanitary surroundings, surely he would have made a healthy youth. If, when grown to working years, he could have returned, wet and tired, to a dry warm home, surely he would have made a better workman, a better husband, a better father of the generations yet unborn.

How often is it said that "So-and-so is a fine workman, respectable, clean and sober." How often of another: "That he is no good, slovenly, dirty, and he drinks." In almost every instance the one man lives in a decent cottage, whilst the other lives in a wretched hovel.

Environment is always at work upon the man; it can be counteracted by changing the conditions; but good, healthy, keen workmen can never be obtained if they are housed as badly as they are to-day. In pure flesh and bone the gain by better housing conditions would be enormous.

Dr. Harris, in his report on the health of Islington, remarks that: "Owing to modern sanitation (in its widest sense) 1,935 people were alive in 1911 who would otherwise have died in that year if there had been no improvement in the mortality rates since 1893; and that 704 people would have died in 1911, who are now alive, if there had been no improvement in the death-rate since 1901. These figures . . . represent the saving of life in only one year. . . . Let us not forget that such a saving of life (and all that it means in freedom from disease, sickness, loss of employment and wages) represents a sum of money many times more than we annually spend out of rates, and that therefore the people are the wealthier by that sum. Truly



Islington has had its return for the expenditure many times over."

The lesson that Dr. Harris would teach is that "We should not be too niggardly in spending money on new and approved methods of health administration. . . . They will repay us many fold."

Think how fortunate the agricultural labourer would be were he but born one of the brutes he tends—were he a horse, a cow, or even a pig. Compare the stable of the horse, the byre of the cow, or the sty of the pig, with the cottage of the labourer. Look upon the outbuildings of any prosperous farmer or wealthy landowner. The walls are not porous nor the inside damp; there are no broken or uncemented floors; the water is not coming through the roof; the sanitary provisions are not bad or even wholly wanting. Nothing of the kind is here; but a well constructed building: dry walls, good floors, sound roofs, perfect drainage.

Why is it that the homes of the cattle are so good? Because it pays! Men who have spent their lives in the rearing of cattle and swine know that the results from well-tended, well-housed stock are immeasurably finer than from those ill-tended and ill-housed. It is impossible to raise a champion bull or stallion, or a fat prize sow, in a cold damp shed; therefore these brutes are housed in a warm, dry home. If such a prize beast is lost it may not be possible to breed another. Human beings cannot be entered for a show—they are valueless for such purposes. After all, if a farmer loses a good ploughman from pneumonia or pleurisy, or if a horseman becomes crippled with

rheumatism, it is not impossible to get another. There is little fear of the breed dying out. He is paid his wages, and it is little concern of any one's to see that he is well housed and properly cared for!

This is the reason of the contrast. It is not because man is naturally unkind and does not care about those under him. It is because the employer does not realize that it would pay him to have good, healthy labourers just as it pays him to have good, healthy cattle on his estate.

Of course it does pay. There is not the faintest doubt that the better housed and better cared for the labourer is, the better workman by far will his employer find him; the more he will produce, the greater profits will he yield upon the farm. Thus from the economic point of view, the bad housing of the rural workers is shockingly unsound.

Financially it is also a great burden. Epidemics are costly to the State; all the cost of sickness or premature decay will come upon the rates. How much bad housing is responsible for the burden of poor-houses and lunatic asylums—for lunacy is most rife amongst agricultural labourers—it is impossible definitely to state. But there is not the least doubt that it is responsible to a very large extent for this outlay, necessary only in part.

There is nothing more vital to the welfare of the State than the health of its people. There is nothing more vital to the health of the people than the manner of their housing.

## CHAPTER V

### THE EFFECTS OF BAD HOUSING ON MORALS AND CHARACTER

“We quarrelled like brutes, and who wonders?  
What self-respect could we keep,  
Worse housed than your hacks and your pointers,  
Worse fed than your hogs and your sheep?”

“Our daughters with base-born babies  
Have wandered away in their shame,  
If your misses had slept, squire, where they did,  
Your misses might do the same.”  
—*The Bad Squire*: C. KINGSLEY.

THERE is no ignoring the bad effects of a dearth of houses and overcrowding in the villages upon the whole tone of national life. Cases are perpetually occurring where young men and women cannot get married because there are no cottages for them to make their homes. This is a premium upon immorality; and often leads to the utter ruin of many young lives.

Sometimes these young people get married and go to live with parents—a most unsatisfactory and unwholesome beginning for the young married pair; for they want a home of their own in which to shake down steadily together. If the young wife has not the responsibility of a home upon her shoulders, she may become slovenly and careless; and, when the chance comes for them to get a cottage of their own, she will not enter upon her

duties with the zest of earlier days; the husband will be discontented with his home; a beginning full of life and promise will quickly have been spoilt.

One girl, for the first seven years of her married life, lived in her mother's cottage; for she and her husband could get none of their own. Another young married couple had to live in lodgings for a year before they could find a home. Such conditions do not give our younger generation a chance to grow up good and healthy citizens.

What must be the effect in morals upon the young boys and girls who live in the cottages which have been described? There is no decency or reticence possible. Out of 80 cottages in one village "scheduled as coming within the category of houses for the working classes," there were reported to be no cottages with more than two bedrooms. This may be innocuous when the children are very young, but such provision becomes increasingly inadequate as the children grow up.

In two two-bedroom cottages there were respectively two parents and eight children, and two parents and five children; and such examples can be multiplied *ad nauseam*. Some of these little boys and girls as they grow up will commit immoral and indecent offences, and then they will be punished by the State, punished for offences of which they could hardly be expected to be innocent if the conditions under which their early years were spent are taken into consideration. It is truly hard that men and women should be condemned because they have failed to live up to a standard set by those whose path is not beset by such temptations.

Destroy the temptations and then punishment may be meted out to the transgressors. But so long as these erring children are placed in vile surroundings, in the very jaws of temptation, the blame must not only be on the transgressors themselves.

The dearth of cottages results in the partial enslavement of many village labourers. Throughout the evidence quoted elsewhere comes the same sad refrain: "We dare not complain, or out we go." We have seen women who have refused to let men enter their cottages, men who have been their friends for years and helped them in their troubles. Poor wretches! it was not their fault—the landlord had been round and threatened them that, if they allowed a soul to cross the threshold, they would be turned out next day. The alternative was clear before them, and they dared not run the risk. The only other roof that they could get would be the workhouse or the wide vault of heaven; the only floor the damp cold earth; the only walls the shelter of some friendly hedge. What wonder then that these poor women shut the door in the face even of those who were their friends!

There is another variation of the terrorism which is often applied. That is a rise in rents.

"Although in practically no instance have structural improvements been undertaken, the rents in every instance have during the last five years risen from 10 per cent. to twenty per cent. Most of the increase has been during the last year or two, such increase in no way corresponding to a rise in rates. . . . The rise in rents of old cottages, which by reason of their age should be of less, not greater,

letting value, clearly demonstrates that the inhabitants have no option but to comply. Indeed, when questioned . . . as to why they acquiesce in the increase, the reply has invariably been : ' We have nowhere else to go to . . . or we would neither pay nor stay.' "

Whenever the slightest thing is done by the landlord to any of his property : if water is laid on or the smallest repair executed, this is at once an excuse to raise the rent. In one case the owner of a row of cottages put all the rents up two pence a week on the excuse that the rates had risen by that amount ; whereas nothing of the kind had actually happened. This shows that if there is no genuine excuse for a rise some other will soon be found. Again the inhabitants dare not complain, for they know very well what the alternative must be.

The landlords are not to be blamed too much for this rack-renting. They are often little men themselves ; and the demand for the accommodation they have to offer is so vastly in excess of what exists, that the knowledge that they can get pretty well what they may ask is too much for their cupidity to resist. No man or woman can be free under these conditions. The control is absolute ; whether it be in politics, in local matters, or in aught else.

There is a certain row of cottages, some five or six in number, owned by a small shopkeeper, whose shop is close at hand. Some short time ago he told his tenants that they must purchase at his shop, or leave his cottages. Was ever such audacity, such insolence as this !

In another case, a man who lived in a cottage belonging to a public-house was called upon by the

publican; asked why he did not come more frequently for his beer; and plainly told that unless he became a more frequent visitor to the public-house, he might expect notice to go. Such compulsion and control is ruinous to the moral fibre of a nation. It destroys all manhood, all independence.

The "tied" cottage is another factor very detrimental to our national life. There are many farms throughout the country, whose labourers are housed in cottages upon the farm, which go with the holding. Under this system the farm labourer is practically the bond-slave of the farmer. For if he loses his job his home is gone as well; and if he vacates his home he will certainly lose his job. Here the man has no hope whatever, he can never get out of the position he is in. His independence has gone, his moral fibre is weakened, his sense of citizenship is never awakened.

Farmers like this system because they know their labourers are bound to the soil—as were the villeins of old—and cannot leave the farm; and because they believe that more is got out of the man if his thoughts and labours are devoted purely to the service of his master and the land. They are utterly wrong in this conception. The better man is ever the better workman, and the free man better than the bond. A man's labour cannot primarily be measured by the length of time he toils, nor the quantity of work he does. The essential factor is the quality of the work.

Open up before a labourer the possibility of a brighter future, the hope of rising in the world, and his whole intellect will brighten and the quality of his work will undoubtedly improve.



The great French traveller and thinker, De Tocqueville, tells how, when journeying through the United States of America, he came upon a reach of the great Mississippi River in the heart of that country. The river formed the boundary between two States; the one was a slave-owning State, the other admitted of no bond labour. On each side of the river were great sugar plantations, and the difference in cultivation was marvellous to behold. On the south bank of the river the plantation was worked by slave labour. The canes were none too healthy, nor the soil well worked; whilst the slaves were working there laboriously, with no energy and life. The whole prospect was unpleasant to behold. On the north bank the plantation was worked by free labour. Here the crop looked healthy, the soil well cared for; whilst among the canes could be seen the labourers, working for their hire, full of energy, singing as they went. Prosperity was on every hand.

De Tocqueville draws the conclusion—a conclusion as old as the history of labour, but none the less true and potent for that reason, and not always fully understood to-day. Forced labour is never so good as free labour; the more under control the man may be, the more slovenly, the more careless, will his work become.

It is evident that the labourers themselves thoroughly dislike the tied-cottage system. Many of them often refuse to live in the “Master’s Rents”; and if the farmer offers them allotments on the farm, and perhaps such inducements as manure and seed, it will usually be found that the labourer prefers to take his little plot in the public



allotments and buy his own implements and seed. For "supposin' I gets the sack," says he, "what happens to my taters and things then?" He is fighting hard the whole time for his freedom; but it is a tough fight and it requires a good man to carry it through. It is a fight in which everything should be done to encourage and not hinder him.

This system would cease directly there was a proper supply of cottages in the villages. Farm labour of the best type is not so plentiful that the farmer can pick and choose. If the labourer can find a cottage he will usually find work. And before long there can be little doubt that the farmer would realize that the man in the "free" house is a better labourer and a better man than the one he has "tied" to the farm.

But so long as the housing conditions remain as they are to-day, so long will this vicious system continue.

We have now seen some of the evils due to the bad and insufficient housing accommodation in the villages of England. A great number of young men and women are being driven from the land; the farmer is losing his best men; the State her best citizens. The health of many on the countryside is being undermined and children are being given no opportunity of becoming strong and healthy men and women—an economic and financial loss. The morals of the villages are being ruined. Young men and young women are not given the chance to become decent and respectable members of the State. Men and women lose their independence and self-respect.

If, on the other hand, a sufficiency of good homes

were erected in the villages, the depleted countryside would be repopulated with a strong, keen peasantry; happy and contented; aiming at a higher goal, with hopes and prospects before them; far better workers than the old. The emigration of the younger generation to the towns and colonies would be stopped, thus easing the strain upon the town and saving many a valued life to be an expert in the fields instead of becoming a casual worker at the dockyard gate. All a direct gain to the State. The physical deterioration of the nation would no longer continue. A healthy peasantry would be brought into existence and much would have been done to stamp out tuberculosis and other diseases from the nation. The health-bill of the country would be far lighter—a financial gain to every citizen in the land. The moral tone and fibre of the people would be raised to a height hitherto undreamt of. The younger generations would lead the clean hard life that makes a nation strong and happy.

It may be said that this is an Ideal which we alive to-day will never see—a vision of the centuries to come. Were it an Ideal it would require no excuse on that account. For a nation which neglects Ideals and scoffs at them is a nation in decline. Ideals are things which do not come to pass, therefore this is no Ideal. It is not a vision of the centuries to come, but a prophecy of a not far distant future.

To convince a nation of the need for action two things must be brought to pass. You must expose the evils that exist. You will then have touched the nation's heart, and half your battle will be won.

You must show that the evils which have now been realized are an economic and financial burden to the State. You will then have touched the nation's pocket, and your victory is complete.

Here these things have been attempted. I believe that the near future holds forth not promise of Ideals alone, but of actual Deeds—Deeds which will change the face of England's countryside, and make of it a place worthy the joint effort of a bounteous Nature and benignant man.

## CHAPTER VI

### HOUSING AND THE LEGISLATURE. THE EARLIER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT

“No builder who is looking for a return on his capital outlay will put up houses in the country. Landowners, impoverished by agricultural depression, have not the means to do it. The Rural District Councils, who are mostly farmers, will not do it because it will increase the rates, which they have been taught to believe are a charge upon themselves.”

—*The Children of the Nation*: SIR JOHN GORST.

IN the year 1884 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the Housing of the Working Classes in the United Kingdom. But nearly thirty years later, we have really very little progress to report with regard to the villages of the land.

In rural England conditions are somewhat better from a sanitary standpoint than they were a couple of decades ago. But structurally the cottages are considerably worse, and there are fewer of them. What is the reason for this? There are throughout the villages a great number of very old cottages erected long before building bye-laws had been thought of, and when the science of sanitation was almost unknown. The average age of a cottage at the present day would be certainly not less than 70 to 90 years.

Attempts have been made of late to render these cottages sanitary, but they would not lend them-

selves to modern requirements, and little could be done to improve them. These cottages are, then, structurally worse to-day because many of them are falling into decay. A report on my native village contains the remark that "the life of a considerable number (of cottages) cannot be more than twenty years." This was six years ago; so that in that village within fourteen years a large proportion of the cottages will either fall down of their own accord or will have to be pulled down.

There are fewer cottages in the villages because many owners will not incur, or cannot afford, the expense of carrying out the repairs necessary to satisfy the local authorities that their property is fit for habitation. These repairs will probably cost several years' rent; therefore the cottages are pulled down and the dearth is greatly increased.

It may appear strange that new cottages have not been built if there is such a great demand. The reason is because it does not pay. In the old days, before the bye-laws had come into operation, a small two-bedroom cottage, with three-inch walls, no proper foundations, and in every way insanitary, could be built to pay quite well if let at two or three shillings a week. Now this is impossible.\* No private owner can build a cottage in conformity with the local bye-laws which will give him a fair

\* "The outside walls of many old country cottages consist of timber-work framed together, with strong posts at each corner, and upright pieces or studs at intervals between. These are fixed to the plates that carry the floor joists and to the plates that carry the foot of the rafters at the eaves of the roof. The spaces between the woodwork are filled in with brickwork, in some cases the bricks are laid lengthways flat, making a wall four and a half inches thick; sometimes they are laid lengthways and on edge, the thickness is then only two and a half inches."

return for his money if let at less than five shillings a week. Therefore it will be found that as the old cheap cottage decays it is only replaced by the modern dear one—which the tenant of the old is unable to afford.

In one village some twenty odd cottages have been built in the last ten years. But there is not one of them let at less than four shillings, whilst many rise to five and seven—rents utterly beyond the reach of the agricultural labourer, for his wages vary there from fifteen to eighteen shillings a week.

As private enterprise was unable to supply the need for more cottages, legislation became necessary. And the result was the first Housing Act of 1890.

Mr. Balfour's Housing of the Working Classes Act is now admitted by all Housing reformers to have been a complete failure in the rural districts; so complete that only eight Rural District Councils in the whole country have adopted the Act during the twenty years that it has been in operation.

Consider the causes of this failure. I will again take that village the evidence and reports on which have been already dealt with elsewhere; for from this example it will readily be seen how cumbrous was the machinery of the Act; how difficult it was to put into operation; and, when once put into operation, how remote were the chances of success. In January, 1904, the Parish Council of the village in question passed a resolution drawing the attention of the Rural District Council to the want of cottage accommodation in the village, and requesting them to use their powers under Part III of the Act to remedy the dearth.

Various reports were made by the Parish Council and the officers of the District Council itself, but nothing was done; and therefore, in December, 1905, the Parish Council resolved that "Inasmuch as the . . . Rural District Council have failed to adopt Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890 . . . this Council hereby appeals to the County Council . . . to take action accordingly, as contemplated in Section 6 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890."

A whole year of further investigations and correspondence passed; and it was not until November, 1906, that the Inquiry was held which has been dealt with elsewhere (page 12). Two years and ten months had thus expired before any tangible progress had been made.

In December of the same year the Committee appointed to hold the Inquiry reported to the County Council:—

(1) "That the . . . County Council are satisfied . . . that the Rural District Council . . . ought to have taken steps for the adoption of Part III of the . . . Act . . . and have failed to do so."

(2) "That all the powers of the Rural District Council . . . for the purposes of Part III . . . be, and the same are hereby transferred to the County Council."

(3) "That the County Surveyor be, and he is hereby, instructed to prepare and submit . . . plans for the erection of ten houses."

Thus at the end of three years it appeared as if the Act were to be adopted and cottages built. But it was not to be, for at the last moment an event

happened which destroyed the whole scheme, and the three years' hard work of the promoters seemed to have been in vain.

Early in 1907 a Parish Council election took place; the supporters of the proposal were thrown out; and the new Council expressing their desire not to pursue the matter any further, it was promptly dropped. The cause of this defeat lay in the fact that if the cottages had been erected an additional rate of 1.39 pence in the pound would have been necessary. It was this rate which destroyed the scheme.

One lesson was clearly learnt, and the weakness of the Act stood revealed. The lesson was this—That any scheme which might be proposed involving the slightest burden upon the rates was doomed to instant and complete disaster. The difficulty of getting the machinery into motion lay in that the Act was adoptive, and that its application lay in the hands of those least willing to use it. Adoptive Acts are very seldom of much practical service because the necessary driving force is very rarely present.

This example shows how the electors will have nothing to do with an increase in the rates; and any local authority will do all in its power to avoid the necessity of imposing any such burden. And if the Act which will necessitate such a burden is adoptive it will certainly never be used unless under extreme pressure; councillors will not run the risk of being bundled out of office at a coming election because they have abetted such a scheme.

Further, many members of the Parish and District Councils throughout the land are very often



owners of old and bad cottages; they would be the very people to be hit if any attempt were made to inquire into present conditions or to consider the advisability of building under Part III. It is too much to expect of ordinary mortals that they should be willing to put their hands into their own pockets for the betterment of the nation at large.

Look at two places where the Act was adopted. At Ixworth in Suffolk, eight cottages were built on four acres of land, at a total cost of £1,700, or £212 10s. per cottage. The cottages were let at £5 5s. per year (two shillings a week), which of course means an annual deficit of at least £5 5s. per cottage per annum. So that in this case there was a heavy burden upon the rates.\*

At Penshurst, in Kent, six cottages were erected at a cost of about £1,800. The rent was fixed at five shillings per week, and there was no burden upon the rates. But the rent in this case is far in excess of what a purely agricultural labourer can afford to pay. The futility of such a rent in country villages is obvious when it is known that in one village where 74 cottages were reported on, there were only four let at this sum. All the rest were considerably below it.

From these two examples it will be seen that, either there must be a burden on the rates, if cottages are built under the Act; or the rent will be too high for agricultural labourers to pay. As far then as rural areas were concerned the Act of 1890 might as well not have become law.

In 1900 an amending Act was passed for the purpose of making the machinery of the earlier Act less

\*W. Thompson : *Housing Handbook*, pp. 133-4.

cumbrous and more easy of application. But it was of no practical value, for it did not touch the really weak spots of the Act—viz. : That it was only adoptive and would entail a burden upon the rates. Nine more years had to pass before any further important legislation took place.

During these years the conditions grew steadily worse. Many more old cottages were going rapidly into decay, and a considerable number were pulled down ; whilst they could not be replaced by the authorities, and were not rebuilt by private enterprise. Sanitary regulations and the building bye-laws were increasing in stringency, and in many cases defeating the very object they had in view.

It was impossible for the local authorities to close a single cottage in their respective areas without making the conditions even worse than they had been before. There was nowhere for the people removed from the closed cottages to go to ; and the result would have simply been further overcrowding in the cottages that were left. Thus the sanitary authorities were unable to enforce their regulations, which in many cases were practically a dead letter. Their only alternative was to build ; and that they could not, or would not, do. No new cottages were being built, the old ones were falling into further decay, and the local authorities were powerless or unwilling to make their existence felt.

Many country cottages which are unfit for human habitation are not worth repair ; if a movement for reform were made in the district, they would have to be closed, and as there are no other

cottages to take their places, the inmates would be driven out of the country into the towns.

In December, 1908, a report was presented to the House of Commons by Lord Islington (then Sir John Dickson-Poynder, M.P.), as Chairman of the Select Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes Amendment Bill, introduced by Mr. F. Mackarness, M.P., in the preceding April.

The findings of the report were that :—

(1) The Rural District Councils did not do their duty under the Sanitary Acts or the Housing Act of 1890, and that those who tried to act were met by every possible obstacle.

(2) That the County Councils, instead of stimulating the Rural District Councils to provide better housing accommodation, were either apathetic, or abetted the District Councils in their action.

(3) That the various Central Authorities, whilst freely circularising the Councils as to their duties, either could not, or would not, give the facilities for acquiring cheap land, cheap building and cheap money—essentials for the production of cottages in rural areas at the normal rents prevailing in those areas.

(4) That the laws with regard to Land, Housing and Sanitary Administration were cumbrous, inadequate, and costly to carry out, and made progress almost impossible, whilst they have failed to provide the machinery necessary to give effect to enlightened public opinion, as against those bodies and persons who believe themselves to be interested in opposing the improvement of present cottages, and the provision of new ones.

The outcome of this report is to be found in the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOUSING AND THE LEGISLATURE. THE HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING ACT

"But if ye . . . will not do all these commandments . . . I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart."

—*Lev. xxvi. 14-16.*

THE sponsors of the Housing and Town Planning Act had a difficult task before them. They wished to deal with recalcitrant local authorities, who would do all in their power to stop the proper working of the Act. They had to avoid placing any undue burden on the rates. They had to devise a method of dealing with the existing bad cottages. They had to attend to the building of new ones.

The first section\* of the Act quite successfully deals with reluctant Councils, for it makes the Act, unlike its predecessor, compulsory. The language of the law has changed from "May" to "Shall." A further advantage of the section is that it will dispense to a very large extent with the costly and lengthy procedure of Reports and Inquiries, which so terribly hampered the adoption of the earlier Act.

The rate difficulty has been partly met by extending the period over which loans will be granted for

\*Clause 1. "Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890 . . . shall, after the commencement of this Act, extend to and take effect in every urban or rural district, or other place for which it has not been adopted, as if it had been so adopted."

building purposes. The period over which loans extended under earlier schemes varied from thirty to fifty years. Under the new Act the maximum period has been extended to 60 years for the building and 80 years for the land.\*

The method by which local bodies will be stimulated to build is ingenious. The Act makes it the duty of every authority periodically to inspect the cottage property in its area, and to close any dwelling unfit for human habitation; and gives power ultimately to demolish the structure if necessary.†

It should be remembered that, although rather similar provisions were made in the Act of 1890, that Act was adoptive, whilst this Act is compul-

\*Clause 3 (a). "The loan shall be made at the minimum rate allowed for the time being for loans out of the Local Loans Fund; and (b) if the Local Government Board make a recommendation to that effect, the period for which the loan is made by the Public Works Loans Commissioners may exceed the period allowed under the principal Act, or under any other Act limiting the period for which the loan may be made, but the period shall not exceed the period recommended by the Local Government Board, nor in any case eighty years. (c) As between loans for different periods, the longer duration of the loan shall not be taken as a reason for fixing a higher rate of interest."

†Section 17 (1). "It shall be the duty of every local authority . . . to cause to be made from time to time inspection of their district, with a view to ascertain whether any dwelling-house therein is in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation.

(2). "If on the representation of the Medical Officer of Health, or of any other officer of the authority, or any other information given, any dwelling-house appears to them to be in such a state it shall be their duty to make an order prohibiting the use of the dwelling-house for human habitation . . . until in the judgment of the local authority the dwelling-house is rendered fit for that purpose.

Section 18 (1). "Where a closing order in respect of any dwelling-house has remained in operation for a period of three months, the local authority shall take into consideration the question of the demolition of the dwelling-house."

NOTE.—Clause 17 (2) was only Optional in the Act of 1890, not Compulsory as in this Act (1909).

sory; so that whilst, in the past, local authorities were not compelled to make a periodical inspection of cottage property under their control, this duty is now incumbent upon them.

What then is to happen if, when the Inspector makes his report, it is found that several cottages have to be closed, if not permanently, at least temporarily? The Council will have to act upon its own report; it must therefore turn out the tenants of these cottages upon the roadside; for it has been seen that there are no other cottages ready to receive them.\* This is the dilemma which faces local authorities under the Act. Section 17 must be complied with, and, if so, how can people be turned out if they have nowhere else to go?

The only solution of the difficulty is to utilise Part III of the principal Act and build cottages. The local bodies therefore find themselves at the present moment in an impossible position unless they proceed to erect new cottages; and building has been made easier for them by lengthening the period of loan. When the local authorities have built these new cottages in each village, they will then be able to put into operation the inspecting sections of the new Act; but not before.

The Councils are at last awakening to this fact,

\*“If I represented every house that might be considered unfit for habitation and got closing orders, we should soon be without sufficient houses for the people to live in.”—Medical Officer of Health’s Report on the village of Tendring, Essex, 1910.

“Were it not that cottages are so scarce . . . a much larger number would be condemned and really require to be closed.”—Medical Officer of Health’s Report on rural district of Billericay, Essex, 1910.

“In several instances impossible to remedy owing to dearth of good cottages.”—Medical Officer of Health’s Report on the rural district of Sturminster, Dorsetshire, 1910.

and are beginning to see that a way out for them has been found, if they will only make use of it. Several Councils have during the last two years drawn up building schemes and have applied for loans to put them into operation.

In that village where it has been shown that such strenuous attempts were made to apply the Act of 1890 without success, the new Act has been put into operation. It has been shown how in the early months of 1907 the project was ruined; the whole matter was apparently quashed, and it seemed as if nothing further could be done. So things went on for three years; until, in 1910, Mr. Burns's Act having become law, an opportunity arose for further action.

It is interesting to note what had happened during the few years intervening, a period of apparent quiescence.

The previous agitation had not been in vain; for it had turned the attention of many people who had formerly been ignorant that a housing question existed to the conditions in the villages: and many men had become convinced that something ought to be done. The three years' agitation of 1904 to 1907 had been a magnificent educational work, men and women had been compelled to see the evils that existed; and the results of education are never wasted. Thus, when in the early part of 1910 the subject again came up for consideration, public opinion was open to argument, and in many cases willing to be convinced, as to the necessity for action.

What was the attitude of the Rural District Council? On the former occasion this body was bitterly hostile; refused to adopt the Act; appeared



at the County Council Inquiry in opposition to the scheme, and did all in its power to prevent any action being taken in the matter whatever. Since then the 1909 Act had become law, and the Council were under the necessity of applying Section 17 of that Act. They could not do so. Several cottages were reported on as unfit for habitation, and owners were requested to put them into repair. In many cases the expense thus entailed would have been so great that the owners could not possibly have afforded it, and would have preferred to pull the cottages down. In one instance the minimum of repairs to satisfy the Council would have swallowed up fourteen years' rent. The Council could not make closing orders against these cottages, for there was not a single one empty within a radius of three or four miles; and they could not turn these poor people out into the lanes. Then it was that they had recourse, almost with gratitude, to those sections of the new Act which would enable them to use Part III of the Act of 1890, and decided to try and erect cottages, so that they could then enforce the sanitary obligations imposed upon them.

Public opinion was changing, the Council had at last realized the necessity, and cottages could be built without any burden coming upon the rates.

On the 26th October, 1911, a Local Government Board Inquiry was held in the village school to consider the application of the Rural District Council for sanction to a loan "for the purposes of a scheme under Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, for the purchase of land, and the erection of working-class dwellings."

It was almost five years since the County Council



Inquiry had been held in that room; and different indeed was the whole atmosphere from what it was on the former occasion. In 1906 every interest had been present vigorously to oppose the scheme. The small owners, grouped around the room, were represented by a legal adviser, whose duty it was to cross-examine the poor witnesses who had come to make their voices heard. The power of landlordism was apparent on every hand. The Rural District Council was represented by its Clerk, who fought the proposal with all the power and eloquence at his command. In 1911 all this was changed. The small owners were there; no longer in united opposition, but in scattered units; they did not dare to make their voices heard throughout the whole proceedings, to give utterance to their own objections against the general welfare of the community. There was no argument that they could adduce against the cottages being built.

The Clerk to the District Council himself was again present, but different indeed was his attitude on this occasion. He "proceeded to explain the altered attitude of his Council from that which was taken at the County Council Inquiry of 1906. The Housing and Town Planning Act had made Part III of the original Act compulsory instead of adoptive as far as the Rural District Council was concerned, and that body felt that they would be failing in their duty if they did not fall in with the unanimous view of the . . . Parish Council. It was a well-known fact that in all the country districts under the control of the Council there were houses which were not in accordance with modern requirements. The Council was now in the un-

fortunate position of not being able to insist on the tenants leaving, for the simple reason that there was nowhere else for them to go. What the Council wanted was the power to erect new cottages as a sort of safety valve in order that they might get tenants out of undesirable properties.”

The scheme has gone through; and after eight years' laborious endeavour this village is the proud possessor of seven cottages—some of the first to be erected under the Act. These seven cottages are built on just under an acre of land. Each cottage contains a living room, three bedrooms and a scullery. A garden fifteen and a half poles in extent is attached to each cottage: and they are let at four shillings and sixpence a week.

Consider how these will compare with the cottages already existing in the village. There are hardly any cottages containing three bedrooms, and the few that do exist are let at a rental of about five to seven shillings a week. So that from the point of view of interior accommodation alone the new cottages are immeasurably superior to the old, and should be eagerly sought after by the mothers of large families, who have now to sleep five or six children, together with themselves and their husbands, in two small rooms.

The fifteen and a half poles of land attached is a thing unknown to any inhabitant of an existing cottage. There are numerous dwellings with no garden whatever; many have a strip so small as to be useless for cultivation, and only available as a rubbish-heap; whilst very few have more than two or three poles. Such a garden attached to the home is far more valuable to many labourers than a

plot twice the size in the allotment field some distance away. Very often when a man returns from a hard day's work in the fields, or on the road, he is too tired to turn out again and carry his tools some distance to work for a short time upon his plot; as a result, the allotment is often not properly cultivated, and does not produce that of which it is capable. With a garden attached to his own home the man is saved all this extra fatigue and time; he can work there every summer evening, while there is light to see; and he can also put in a few minutes, if he please, before he goes to his work in the early morning, a thing he cannot possibly do if he has to go some way from his home. Moreover, his wife and children can do the light garden work, which they could not go down to the common field to do. In the dry summer they will water, and thus save many a plant which would be lost in the "garden-field."

Fifteen and a half poles is sufficient to enable pigs and poultry to be kept; which, again, the wife can feed; whilst she could not carry the food to a distance. The cottagers themselves look upon this little garden as a priceless boon.

The rent may seem high for an agricultural village; but that expenses have been brought down to near bed-rock will be seen from the financial details of the scheme given elsewhere.\* It was all-important to success that the cottages should be self-supporting, and that no burden should be placed upon the rates. The rent has been adjusted to meet this purpose.

It is not suggested that these cottages will be

\*See Appendix A, p. 133.

available for labourers earning fifteen or sixteen shillings a week, who now pay three or three and sixpence for their homes; this rent in itself is far more than they can reasonably afford. There are other men in the villages—men who earn considerably higher wages than fifteen shillings, the piece-workers and men upon the road. These men now pay more than four shillings for their present homes, and should willingly pay a little higher rent for the better accommodation they are offered at four and sixpence. It is these men who will be the inhabitants of such new cottages. The large garden and additional bedroom would materially assist them to pay any higher rent; for where these tenants have not large families, and do not therefore want the additional room, they will be able to take some young unmarried man as lodger; many of whom are to be found in our villages unable to get a decent room to sleep in; and who are now often accommodated in already overcrowded two-bedroom cottages.

The effect upon this village of these seven new cottages should be a moving upward of the population. Those who now live in the fairly good cottages will move to these new ones. Those that they have vacated will be therefore empty and available for the inhabitants of the worse cottages below. We shall therefore give those who inhabit the still worse cottages in the village the opportunity they have long sought, but never could obtain, of coming out of them and getting into more decent homes.

If sufficient new cottages are erected, two further results will come to pass. The rents of all the

cottages, which have so steadily risen in the last few years to almost famine price, can no longer be thus arbitrarily raised, for there will not be this great dearth. The local authorities will be able to close some of the insanitary houses, a thing they have been unable to do until they gave the former occupants the chance of finding homes elsewhere.

It has been mentioned how under the Act of 1909 it is the duty of all local authorities to make an inspection of dwelling houses in their areas. "The regulations have been made by the Board, and they require definite arrangements to be made by the local authority for a thorough inspection, . . . the keeping of records as to the condition of each house inspected in regard to specified matters which may affect the health of the inhabitants, the periodical submission of such records to the local authority for directions as to the action to be taken, and the inclusion in the Medical Officer of Health's Report of a statement of the work of inspection and of the action taken in regard to the houses inspected." On November 9th, 1912, a Memorandum was issued by the Local Government Board giving details as to what had been effected under the Act since it came into operation.

The Board deals in the first place with the application of Section 15 of the Act; that section which states that there shall be an implied undertaking on the part of any landlord who has (in rural areas) let a dwelling-house at a rental of not more than sixteen pounds per annum, that such dwelling shall be kept during the holding in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation.

From December, 1909, the date of the passing of

the Act, to March, 1911, notices under the section were issued in respect of 18,927 houses; whilst the notices issued during the year to 31st March, 1912, referred to 43,160 houses, showing an increase of 128 per cent. over the houses dealt with during the previous six months. Moreover, the number of local authorities who proceeded under the section during the later period shows an increase of 52 per cent. over the earlier period, the numbers being for the two periods 500 and 760, out of a total of 1,819 local authorities. A hundred and twenty-eight per cent. increase of activity on the part of local bodies is no doubt very satisfactory; but it must be remembered that although 760 local authorities have made use of this very valuable sanitary provision, 1,059 other authorities have done nothing in this matter whatsoever.

There are 655 Rural District Councils in England and Wales, 303 of which applied this system in the year ending March, 1912. Sixteen thousand nine hundred dwellings out of the 43,160 in respect of which notices were served are in Rural Areas. In 11,178 cases the notices were satisfactorily complied with; in 90 the local authority acted in default of the landlord; 377 dwellings were closed by landlords who were apparently unwilling to execute the repairs; whilst in 7,126 cases the notices were undisposed of at the end of the period.

“On a comprehensive view of the action of local authorities and of their sanitary officers it cannot but be admitted that very distinct progress has been made during the past year in the direction of securing that houses shall be fit for habitation.” This is undoubtedly true, but the figures appear far more

satisfactory than really is the case; because, less than half the Rural Councils have taken any action whatsoever; more than half the notices served were still outstanding at the end of the period; and over three hundred dwellings had been closed voluntarily by the owners without there being any likelihood of others being erected in their stead.

The Memorandum then proceeds to deal with the most important sections of the Act; those sections which deal with the procedure by way of closing and demolition orders where dwelling-houses are represented to a local authority to be "in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation."\* In 1912, 364 Rural District Councils out of 655 took action under these sections; and the full details of what has been done since the passing of the Act are given in the footnote below.

Year ended 31st March.	No. of houses in respect of which representations were made to the local authorities.	No. of houses made fit for human habitation by owners without the issue of a closing order.	No. of houses closed or demolished voluntarily.	No. of houses in respect of which closing orders were made.	No. of houses in respect of which closing orders were determined.	No. of houses (in respect of which closing orders had been made) demolished by owners without orders for demolition.	No. of houses in respect of which orders for demolition were made.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1909	2,279	1,517	517	119	†	†	21
1910	2,271	1,468	425	258	50	†	34
1911	9,108	2,839	460	973	248	110	91
1912	19,795	6,287	742	1,920	408	169	165

\* Sections 17, 18: see p. 69.

† This information is not available.



“The table discloses,” so says the Board, “a very marked activity on the part of local authorities in dealing with houses in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation. The figures for the two years ended 31st March, 1912, conclusively prove that the facilities afforded by the Act of 1909 for dealing with this class of property have been productive of good results, and that there is a real desire on the part of some local authorities to carry out the duty imposed upon them in this respect. . . . It appears, however, . . . that no closing orders have been made by a very considerable number of local authorities. In the year ended 31st March, 1911, some 1,376 local authorities out of a total of 1,819 made no closing orders under the Act of 1909, and in the year ended 31st March, 1912, out of 1,757 local authorities, who have at present made returns of their proceedings, 1,048 made no closing orders under the Act ”;\* and it has been stated that not many more than half the rural authorities have applied these sections.

“A few of the local authorities,” the Board continues, “have corresponding powers under Local Acts, and therefore do not use the powers of the

\*Table of Local Authorities which have applied sections 17 and 18 of the Act of 1909.

	Year ended 31st Mar., 1911.	Year ended 31st Mar., 1912.
Metropolitan Borough Councils (29) ...	11	13
Town Councils of County Boroughs (75)	33	21
Town Councils of other Boroughs (250)	185	137
Other Urban District Councils (810) ...	657	513
Rural District Councils (655) .....	490	304
	<hr/> 1,376	<hr/> 1,048



Act of 1909. . . . As regards some districts it may be said with truth that there are no houses within the terms of Section 17, but undoubtedly there are districts in which little or no action is taken under the section because of the scarcity of suitable houses to which persons displaced may remove. In some of those cases in which local authorities are erecting or proposing to erect houses for the working classes under Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, this course is being taken to facilitate action by the local authority under Section 17."

Once again these figures appear to indicate greater activity and more successful working than really is the case. The Board itself remarks upon the number of authorities which have failed to apply the Act—authorities numbering about 60 per cent. of the total, whilst in 1912 the number of authorities which acted was appreciably less than the total for 1911. It will be found that 1,076\* dwellings were closed under the section, and it has been already stated that 377 other dwellings had been closed under Section 15. So that 1,453 dwellings in rural England and Wales have been closed under the Act in 1912 alone.

The Memorandum next proceeds to deal with the erection of new dwellings under the Act; and, with the details of individual schemes given in the White Paper issued by the Board on August 1st,† 1912, very ample details are available as to the effect of the Act on Rural Housing.

It is well to consider for a moment what had been done prior to 1909 in the erection of dwellings for

\*See table on p. 79.

†Return No. 293.

rural districts. From 1890 to 1909, ten loans were sanctioned, amounting to £34,800;\* whilst from 1890 to 1906, but five Rural District Councils had applied the Act. It is not stated how many cottages were erected under these loans; but it cannot have been more than 180; of which some 120 would have been erected in 1908.

From 1910 to 31st October, 1912, twenty-nine Rural District Councils had applied for loans. The total amount of the loans sanctioned was £75,561, under which 398 dwellings are being erected, and of these totals, 312 dwellings under loans of £59,860 were sanctioned in the ten months January to December of 1912. The Board had, moreover, further applications from seventeen Rural District Councils under consideration in November, 1912, amounting to £55,000.

If these loans are sanctioned, a total of £114,860 will have been granted in the year 1912; a total nearly four times as great as the whole of the loans applied for and sanctioned during the nineteen years 1890 to 1909. "The above figures," says the Board, "show very gratifying progress in regard to the provision of houses under Part III of the Act of 1890."

Although undoubted progress has been made, and there is no desire to grudge the Board whatever satisfaction it may gain thereby, once more the progress is far more apparent than real. The Board is satisfied on the one hand because 312 new cottages were being erected in Rural England last

\*No loans were granted in the years 1890-1891, 1893-1898, 1900-1901, 1907; and £23,300 out of a total of £34,800 was in two loans in 1908, leaving £11,500 to be spread over a period of eighteen years.

year, whilst, on the other, its own return shows that 1,453 old and decrepit dwellings had been closed or demolished in the same period, causing an increased dearth of 1,141 cottages on the countryside.

It has been clearly shown in the earlier chapters of this book that the dearth of cottages is very great throughout England; the Board has stated in its own Memorandum that Section 17 has not been applied so generally as should have been the case on account of this very fact; whilst the reports of the Medical Officers of Health throughout the country corroborate this statement.\* Yet the Board is quite satisfied that "very gratifying progress" has been made.

It is interesting to consider in fuller detail a few of the schemes outlined in the White Paper; for there is much valuable information to be gleaned from them. One Rural District Council in particular has been most active under the Act, and that is the East Elloe Council in Lincolnshire. Loans amounting to £6,287 have been granted, and thirty-two cottages are being erected in eight parishes. The average cost of each cottage, including the land, is £196; whilst the rents vary from 3s. 3½d. in one parish to 4s. 9¾d. in another, and in only one case is the estimated expenditure greater than the estimated income, and in that case the deficit is quite small. All these cottages contain three bedrooms; eight containing a parlour, the rest a living-room and scullery only. All are provided with substantial gardens; in four cases an acre is attached to each, whilst twelve have about half an acre.

\*See Appendix C, Page 141.

The East Elloe Council is indeed to be congratulated on the work it has undertaken; and it is not even yet satisfied, for it applied in 1912 for two further loans for ten more cottages to be erected in two parishes at a cost of £2,100.

Only in one case—at Chester-le-Street—are cottages being erected with less than three bedrooms; and this scheme is really an urban one; for forty-two cottages are being built in streets at a cost of about £190 each; the two-bedroom cottages to let at five shillings and fourpence a week; in this case the high rent is partly due to the fact that £1,056 had to be paid for just over an acre of land.

Only five schemes provide for a parlour; all the rest being content with a living-room and scullery. This is a question upon which authorities are much at variance. Some contend that if the cottage contains but one living-room, the agricultural labourer is placed on a scarcely higher plane than the pig in his sty, or the horse in his stall. Others contend that it is far better to have one large healthy room than two; one of which is in continual use, whilst the other is hardly ever entered.

There is much to be said for a parlour and a living-room, but whilst it is a question of expense, and it is found impossible to build with the two rooms at anything like a reasonable rent, the claims of health must come before other considerations.

Another point that is to be noticed on looking through this Report is the comparatively small part of the total cost which is represented in the price of the site, for this means that the rents would not be materially reduced were the land to be obtained at

considerably less cost. The details as to rent are most instructive. In one case the rent is six shillings and fourpence; in two six shillings; in one less than six shillings; in three less than five shillings; in twelve less than four shillings and sixpence; in six less than four shillings; in eleven less than three shillings and sixpence; in four less than three shillings. Thus, out of forty various cases; only in fifteen will the cottages be let at a rental of less than three shillings and sixpence per week; the highest rental which an agricultural labourer should be called upon to pay.

In nine of these cases, the estimated expenditure is greater than the estimated income; in four, expenditure and income balance; whilst in two cases only is the income in excess of the expenditure—at Yeovil, where the income is £100, and the expenditure £98; and in East Elloe, where the income is £51, and the expenditure £50; whilst in six cases the estimated rental is exclusive of rates.

The impossibility of building cottages under the Act to let at a rental which the labourer can afford to pay whilst at the same time placing no burden upon the rates, is shown by the case of Hensted in Norfolk. Here eight cottages were erected at a cost of £1,185; the rental was fixed at a figure which would have made the cottages self-supporting. Not a single one could be let, with the result that the rent had to be reduced and the loss placed upon the rates.

Up to October, 1912, the Local Government Board would not sanction any loans for building schemes which showed any marked deficit on the

estimated balance sheet. Since that date, however, the policy of the Board has changed; for they have realized the utter uselessness of the Act for rural districts if rentals must be as high as four shillings or four and sixpence a week. It was in the now famous "Swaffham" case that the Board abandoned their former attitude. At a meeting of the Swaffham (Norfolk) Rural District Council in October, 1912, a letter from the Board was read in which they stated that "the Board recognized that any scheme for the provision of such houses might involve a small charge on the rates, but although they regarded it as important that a scheme for the erection of working-class dwellings should, as far as possible, be self-supporting, the fact that such a scheme showed a small annual deficiency would not preclude them from sanctioning a loan for the provision of the houses if the circumstances did not admit of a satisfactory self-supporting scheme."

These facts clearly show that it is impossible to erect cottages under the Act to come within the reach of the agricultural labourer.

It has been seen that whatever increase of activity has taken place under the Housing and Town Planning Act has been on the part of a comparatively small number of local authorities. It is well to inquire if anything has been done to stimulate, or coerce, those other authorities which are apparently either inefficient or recalcitrant.

There are provisions in the Insurance Act of 1911 which will do much in forcing those authorities to work the Housing and Town Planning Act as it should be worked, both with regard to the inspection of existing cottages and the erection of new ones.

The Insurance Act provides that if there is excessive sickness in any locality, and it is proved that such excess is due to bad housing, and that the local council has not applied the Housing Acts satisfactorily, the council is liable to be charged with the extra financial burden thus placed upon the Insurance Fund.\*

This section should prove to be very effective; for it will place a premium upon sanitary conditions and good health. It will now be to the interest of all parties concerned that each locality is as healthy as it possibly can be.

It has been stated that the great difficulty in getting local authorities to apply the Housing Acts has been owing to the fact that such action

\*Clause 63 (1). "Where it is alleged by the Insurance Commissioners or by any Approved Society, or Insurance Committee, that the sickness which has taken place among any insured persons . . . is excessive, and that such excess is due . . . to bad housing or insanitary conditions in any locality . . . or to neglect on the part of any person or authority to observe or enforce the provisions of any Act relating to . . . public health or the housing of the working classes, or any regulations made under such Act . . . the Commissioners or the Society or Committee making such allegation may send to the person or authority alleged to be in default a claim for the payment of the amounts of any extra expenditure alleged to have been incurred by reason of such cause as aforesaid. . . ."

(2) "If . . . it is proved . . . that the amount of sickness has (i) during a period of not less than three years before the date of the inquiry; or (ii) if there has been an outbreak of any epidemic, endemic or infectious disease, during any less period, been in excess of the average expectation of sickness by more than ten per cent., and that such excess was in whole or in part due to any such cause as aforesaid, the amount of any extra expenditure . . . shall be ordered . . . to be made good. (a) Where such excess or part thereof as aforesaid is due to bad housing or insanitary conditions in the locality, or to any neglect on the part of any local authority to observe or enforce any such Act . . . it shall be made good by such local authority as appears . . . to have been in default."



might necessitate an addition to the rates. Now the very inactivity itself is not only liable, but almost certain, to mean a similar burden. For careless and recalcitrant authorities will most probably find themselves penalised under this Act, and forced to bear the additional financial burden arising from an excess of sickness in their areas. It will, therefore, be to the interest of every local authority to inquire with far more thoroughness than heretofore into the sanitary conditions of the villages under their charge; to see that any insanitary cottages are at once repaired or demolished; and to build new cottages wherever necessary. For the greater the number of good sanitary houses in their areas, and the fewer the number of old insanitary ones, the less will be the danger of any burden resulting from an excess of sickness.

Never before have local authorities been penalised on account of their negligence in attending to sanitary and housing conditions. The very possibility of such penalty will make those bodies which up to now have been the most reluctant to act the most active; for such bodies have usually refrained from action because of their fear of an increased rate; and the same fear will now drive them in an opposite direction to immediate action.

They would not act, for they feared lest they should be turned out of office if their stewardship resulted in making the electors place their hands further into their pockets. Now they will act for fear of dismissal should they by their very refusal to act impose a further burden upon their constituents. It is humorous that the very thunder-



bolts these bodies have been continuously forging to destroy the Acts they should have long ago enforced, should now, at last, recoil upon their own heads; that the weapons they have long employed to prevent the proper housing of our village population should now be the very ones employed to ameliorate the conditions they have so long striven to defend.

It will be to the interest of all Approved Societies to see that the housing conditions in every locality where their members reside are as good and sanitary as possible; because the less the amount of sickness, the less proportion of their funds will go in sick pay, and the greater the surplus that will be thus available for the additional benefits they can offer; and the greater the benefits any Society can offer, the greater number of members will it attract. For very similar reasons every Insurance Committee will desire that the health in the locality shall be sound. For the less funds required for sickness, the greater the surplus for other purposes.

The Insurance Commissioners themselves will stand over all these. Responsible for the expenditure of the Insurance Fund; desirous of making the benefits extend as far as well may be; anxious therefore that as small a proportion as possible of the fund should be spent in this direction; and for this reason keenly alive to the necessity for keeping each area free from epidemics and disease; and therefore desirous that the inhabitants of each area should be as well and sanitarily housed as circumstances will permit.

A state of affairs will have been brought about such as the most optimistic had hardly dared to

expect; a state in which it will be to the advantage of all concerned to house the labourers decently and well.

One of the greatest difficulties against which housing reformers have for long years had to contend has been the strenuous opposition of so many in authority and power. This will now be largely changed, for many of those who were originally opponents in the fight will now group themselves with their former enemies, the advocates of better housing.

There is another provision in the Insurance Act which will further the cause of Rural Housing. For under its provisions additional money will be provided wherewith to build new cottages.\*

This completes all the legislation of any importance that has so far been passed dealing with the Housing Question. To sum up the results:

In a period of twenty-two years, three important measures have been passed;† two of them dealing specifically with the problem, and one indirectly affecting it. The first measure was practically useless, for under it very few cottages were erected in

\*Clause 54 (3). "The Insurance Commissioners shall ascertain periodically what sums standing in the National Health Insurance Fund . . . are available for investment, and the amount so ascertained shall . . . be carried to a separate account, and shall be . . . invested . . . in any securities which are for the time being authorised by Parliament as investments for Savings Banks Funds, but . . . shall give preference to stocks or bonds issued . . . for raising capital for the purposes of a local loans fund where the purpose for which such capital is required is the making of allowances for the purposes of the Housing of the Working Classes Acts, 1890-1909."

†(1) The Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890.

(2) The Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909.

(3) The National Insurance Act, 1911.

rural England. The second measure has only been in operation for two or three years; and in that period 398 cottages have been, or are about to be, built; whilst 2,459 bad cottages have been closed or demolished. This is a great improvement upon what was done under the Act of 1890; but it is after all but a drop in the great ocean of necessity; for only 35\* out of 655 Rural District Councils have taken any action under the building provisions of this 1909 Act. Therefore in twenty-two years some 500 new cottages will have been built under the two Housing Acts in the villages of England and Wales.

The third measure has been in operation too short a period for any criticism to be passed upon its actual effect when it is once fully in operation.

It now remains to inquire what, if anything, further must be done to improve the conditions under which our agricultural labourers are housed. I do not think there will be any one who has studied the conditions here disclosed, and the remedies that have been applied, who will not agree that it is essential for some further and immediate steps to be taken for solving the difficulties, supplying the need, and improving the conditions, that still exist and imperatively demand attention.

\*See White Paper, No. 293.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FUTURE OF RURAL HOUSING. PRESENT NEEDS AND IRELAND'S REMEDY

"Action is the realization of our Ideal, the love not of ourselves but of our fellow-men, the removal of sin and pain, the increase of knowledge of beauty, the binding together of the whole world in the bond of peace."

—*Arnold Toynbee.*

It has been seen that Part I of the Housing and Town Planning Act contains much hope for the future; and many cottages may be built under its provisions throughout rural England.

There is, however, one side of the question which this Act is powerless to affect, the evils of which will almost certainly be aggravated under its administration: viz.: the problem of the cheap cottage. Details have been given of a scheme adopted under the Act,\* a scheme but typical of every other; and it has been shown that the rental of these cottages will be four and sixpence per week. It will be seen that each cottage has cost £161. It might be possible to reduce this price to a certain extent, but not sufficiently to have any material effect on the ultimate total. It must also be remembered that, although the local bye-laws (as in this case) may be the least stringent permitted, any scheme under the Act has to run

\* See Appendix A, p. 133.

the gauntlet of the Local Government Board, and the Board is by no means easy to satisfy.

If this price is considerably reduced by taking off £15 per cottage, making an estimate of £146, and if the land is fairly valued, *i.e.*, £40 per acre, even then the total estimated cost of seven cottages will only be reduced by £225, and this deduction will not lower the rent to much less than four shillings per week.

Land could be taken compulsorily under the Act, and be thus acquired at its true value; but the cost of the necessary preliminaries and investigations involved in this procedure is so great as to result in little ultimate saving on the whole scheme. Only one order for such compulsory acquisition has been confirmed by the Board under the Act of 1909.\*

It has been proposed that the Treasury should make loans to local authorities at the same rate which it pays for the money itself; thus charging no interest or administration expenses; and it has also been proposed that such cottages should be exempt from paying rates. Any such tinkering with the Act, however, would not have the effect of reducing the cost of erection to the extent of almost halving the rent which must now be charged. These suggestions would not bring a rent of four shillings and sixpence down to two shillings and sixpence or three shillings; which is the rental we have to aim at if any real attempt is to be made to deal with the whole problem in a satisfactory manner.

A rent of four shillings and sixpence is quite out-

\*In Norfolk, for the purchase of twelve and a half acres of land; the purchase-money awarded by the Arbitrator was £382.

side the reach of the majority of agricultural labourers in rural England. When it is realized that the cash wages of agricultural labour sink as low as twelve shillings in Oxfordshire, whilst they are not much higher in Dorset, Suffolk, Norfolk and Wiltshire, it will at once be seen that under such conditions it is impossible for the labourers to pay a proper rent for their cottages—for such a wage is little better than an existence on a starvation margin. In my native village, out of 74 cottages, 56 were let at under four shillings; eleven at four shillings; and only seven at a higher rental.\* So that in this particular area cottages could be built under the Act to accommodate no more than 7-74ths of the inhabitants; or in other words only one out of every ten tenants of present cottages is paying a rent equal to or slightly in excess of that to be charged to the tenants of the new; whilst the average rent paid by the occupants of the 74 cottages was only 3s. 1½d. a week; 1s. 4½d. less than the rent for the new Council cottages.

It has been shown that there are men who can afford to pay this rent, and who would move into these more expensive homes; relieving the congestion and tending to prevent the further rise in rents; whilst also enabling some of those in the worse cottages to move up into these better dwellings.

There still remains, however, a great number of labourers who are unable to afford the rent they now pay, far less a higher one. Out of the 74 cottages mentioned, 36—or half—are let at

\*These figures are from a report dated 1906; there is very little change in 1912.

under three shillings a week. These men will be quite unable to avail themselves of the new cottages, for many of them cannot afford to pay the extra shilling or so a week which would enable them to move into the better homes vacated by those who will have gone into the four shillings and sixpence Council cottages. It will be seen, then, that nothing has been done for the rural worker who is now earning fifteen shillings or sixteen shillings a week; and such men are numerous enough, comprising the large majority of purely agricultural labourers. They are, moreover, the very people whom it is most necessary to provide for without delay. They are at present paying far higher rents than they can afford without depriving themselves and their wives and children of proper food and clothing; they are the very people who are the worst housed; who suffer more from ill-health than any other sections of the community; whose homes are not only the nurseries, but the very dispensaries, of epidemics and disease. The very section of the community that Housing legislation should affect, and the very section that cannot be touched by any Act that has yet been placed upon the Statute Book.

Are not these the very cottages which will probably be condemned under Section 17 of the 1909 Act? It is quite probable that in a few years a very large proportion of these cheap cottages will have to be closed or pulled down. What will happen to the labourers who are displaced? Cottages cannot be built for them under the Act; and, unless their wages are raised, they cannot afford to go into the more expensive and better homes.



This is what I mean in asserting that the Housing and Town Planning Act will before long have resulted in creating a worse state of affairs than even exists to-day.

There appear to be only two alternatives. Either the closing sections of the Housing and Town Planning Act and the Housing Sections of the National Insurance Act must be repealed, or cheap cottages must be built without delay, so that those hundreds of families who before long will have to be evicted from condemned dwellings may be provided for elsewhere. And as there appears to be little reason for supposing that these two Acts will be removed from the Statute Book, the only remedy that remains is to proceed at once with the erection of those new cottages which will so shortly be required.

It is evident that some more drastic remedy must be applied. What, then, is that remedy to be? There are several proposals, practical and impractical, which are offered for acceptance. It is well to consider some of the more feasible ones, and see if they offer any solution of the difficulty.

There is an influential and able section of the community which believes that any direct Housing legislation is not only futile but thoroughly bad and uneconomic. These people assert that the only remedy is to free the land; and that, when this is done, the other question will necessarily and in due course settle itself. They affirm that by the erection of cheap cottages, especially if supported by State-grants, the labourer will be placed in really a worse position than he is in to-day, because the day of his emancipation and higher wages will

be thus deferred. There is much wisdom and truth in these assertions. If it were easier to obtain a footing upon the land the demand for agricultural labour would immediately rise, with the result that higher wages would be paid. And when once the labourer receives a proper wage he could afford to pay an economic rent for a decent home. The result would be that when this demand for a better class of cottage has arisen, private enterprise might find that it would pay to erect such dwellings, and with cheap land then available, the problem could be solved.

It is possible that the Taxation of Land Values would result in some of the advantages its exponents claim for it, but I have little confidence in the solution of the Housing Question by these means. Economically this may be a solution to some of the difficulties which now exist, to the great problem which has to be met; and it is not without the bounds of possibility that in the years to come some such system may be applied to deal with many of the social ills that now are rampant.

Even if this proposal is economically sound, is it capable of practical application; and, what is more important, is it capable of immediate adoption? Decidedly such a scheme is not ready for immediate use.

Before long the combined forces of the Housing Act and the Insurance Act will be in operation to close thousands of bad cottages throughout the land; the dearth will be seriously aggravated, and the congestion vastly increased.

What possibility would there be that this suggested cure could come into operation for some con-

siderable period? Even if it came into operation immediately, a long time would have to elapse before the 50 per cent. rise in wages, which it is claimed would result from the application of such a system, could take place; and thus enable the labourers to pay a higher rent. Such a vast economic change as would be involved in the taxation of Land Values cannot be brought about; nor the results which might accrue manifest themselves, for many years at least. Thus it cannot be said that the chances of such a proposal shortly becoming operative are particularly bright. Meanwhile our Housing conditions are unattended to; whilst the dearth becomes steadily greater and the overcrowding steadily worse under the administration of present legislation.

I shall probably be accused by many of being an opportunist; of losing sight of the root cause in the search for palliatives. I am quite willing to meet the accusation, for my belief is that there are certain cases in which the difficulty of removing the cause of an evil justifies the application of palliatives; and if the remedy I wish to see applied in this particular case is a palliative, the very fact of its being so would require no excuse at the present juncture; for circumstances do alter cases. A doctor comes into a patient's house and finds, on examination, that he is suffering from an illness which is quickly gaining ground, and that he is also suffering from a physical defect, which lies at the root of the present illness, but which is not gaining with such rapidity as that illness. If this doctor finds that he can stop the progress of the illness by immediate treatment, whilst the physical

defect would require a far longer period to cure and may be the surgeon's knife—would the doctor not be justified in at once dealing with the illness, whilst leaving the physical defect to a later day? A palliative certainly, but a very necessary and a perfectly justifiable one.

This is the case of the land taxer and the bad cottage. The country is suffering from a serious disease which is growing rapidly worse, sapping its strength, eating into its very heart. The nation cannot afford to let the disease go on increasing while it discusses what the true cause of the defect may be. It must act without delay and adjourn further lengthy and perhaps acrimonious consultations until a later day.

On the 15th March, 1912, a Bill was introduced into the House of Commons by Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, the Unionist Member for Dudley, entitled the "Housing of the Working Classes Bill." The Bill provides that a State subsidy of £500,000 per annum shall be granted in aid of Housing operations in town and country.

This is the second proposed solution—a remedy which may be somewhat unsound from the economic standpoint, but which has the advantage of being directly available and capable of immediate application: viz., State-grants for the erection of cottages in the villages.

If it is justifiable to place a burden upon the rate-payers in this matter; and the principle has been admitted in the Act of 1890, and by the action of the Local Government Board in the case of the Swaffham Rural District Council which has been referred to elsewhere\* :—there seems to be no very

\* See p. 86.

vital objection to placing a burden upon the taxpayer for the same purpose. Whatever arguments can be used in favour of a rate-aided scheme could assuredly be used in favour of a tax-aided one. And the arguments for such financial aid are considerably stronger than might at first sight appear.

If the ratepayer were clearly to realize the ulterior benefits which would accrue from the slight additional burden he might be called upon to bear, he would not hesitate for one moment in sanctioning the expense. Bad housing and insanitary conditions are a perpetual burden to the rates, and any expense incurred in remedying these evils is by no means wasted. It is an investment which will quickly return a high rate of interest in the form of less sickness, fewer epidemics, a declining death-rate, a reduced poor-rate, and a decreasing number of inmates in our asylums.

Reference has been made to an old man who stated that a damp cottage had placed him upon the rates twenty years before his time, for his back was bent double by "rheumatics." This old man and his wife received seven shillings and sixpence a week from the parish, so that one bad cottage had cost the poor-rate £390 in twenty years; an amount sufficient to erect two good new cottages. In a certain parish a scheme for ten cottages was rejected because it would impose a penny burden on the rates, whilst to keep the old man and woman for twenty years had meant a penny rate to that same parish for nearly two years.

There are hundreds of such cases throughout the country; cases which are caused by bad housing

and which are a perpetually heavy burden to the rates; cases which need never have occurred at all but for the housing conditions which prevail.

There is no doubt that if the villages contained good sanitary cottages, the rates before very many years would steadily decline. This is a very cogent reason for the application of State-aid. It may appear to be a financial burden for the moment, but it is really capital placed in the soundest of investments—that of National Health—an investment which returns a far higher rate of interest than any other government security will ever do.

National efficiency is vital to the welfare of the State; and national efficiency can never be secured without that national health which is being steadily undermined by bad housing.

The application of a system of State-grants is not necessarily antagonistic to the other remedy, that of land taxation. The erection of cottages by such means to let at a rent within the reach of the agricultural labourer does not imply that wages will be prevented from rising so long as counteracting influences are at work. And these influences are to be found in the policy of easier access to the land which is being pursued at the present time.

The effect of such legislation as the Small Holdings Act should be to bring more men upon the land; to increase the area under cultivation, and thus to give more employment.

If this tendency continues wages will be bound to rise, and thus the possible evils of State-aid to building would be counteracted. Even if the policy desired by the land taxers is ultimately shown

to be the proper solution, the cottages already erected by the aid of State-grants will only be a help to any such scheme; for they will have reared a healthier, better generation, far more capable of turning to account any opportunities offered to them by the new system than they would be at the present time.

To revert to the original simile—There is no reason why, when once the progress of the disease has been stayed, the physical defect should not then receive attention and every effort be made to remedy, or remove it from the body politic.

To realize what can be done by the aid of State-grants it is only necessary to look at Ireland, and it will be seen what a change has been effected there. Twenty years ago the condition of rural Ireland was terrible to behold. The population was rushing away as from a plague; the land was being denuded of her best sons and daughters; the Irish hovel was a synonym for the worst human habitation it is possible to conceive. This has now all been changed.

The first Irish Labourers Act, under which cottages could be erected, was enacted in 1883; but little was done until 1891. Since then various amending Acts have been passed; and cottages are now built under an Act of 1906, as amended in 1911. Up to 1906, 20,634 cottages had been built, whilst since then the pace has been vastly accelerated, for no less than 18,607 cottages have been built between 1906 and 1912; and a further 3,439 were in course of erection in March, 1912—a grand total of 42,640 homes.

To realize the activity throughout Ireland it



should be mentioned that out of 213 Rural District Councils, 211 have put the Acts into operation. Under the Act of 1906, as amended in 1911, loans to Irish Local Authorities will be granted up to £4,250,000 at  $£3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. for  $68\frac{1}{2}$  years—the  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. including the repayment of principal and interest. Only 64 per cent. of this charge is met by the Irish Local Authorities; the remaining 36 per cent. being in the form of a State-grant—16 per cent. from the Labourers' Cottage Fund and 20 per cent. from the Ireland Development Grant. The State thus pays £1 3s. 5d. interest on every £100 loan, the remaining £2 1s. 7d. being found by the local bodies; with the result that cottages can be let at a very low rental without placing any considerable burden on the rates.

Such a scheme, if applied to England, should entail no burden upon the rates, for the rental that could easily be charged to an English labourer would be considerably in advance of that charged in Ireland.

If the two schemes worked out below\* are compared it will be seen that whereas in the Irish scheme (No. 1) there is a burden on the rates of five shillings and ninepence per cottage; in the suggested English scheme (No. 2) there is a balance in hand of £2 15s. 10d. It must be further noticed that nothing is allowed in either case for repairs, collection of rent, insurance and rates. This would mean that the loss on the Irish cottage is considerably more than five shillings and ninepence; whereas the £2 15s. 10d. balance on the

\* See p. 104.

English cottage would conceivably cover these additional outgoings.\*

It has lately been estimated that 100,000 additional cottages are required in rural England; if such an estimate is correct this would involve an annual loss of £208,000 to the State; a small sum indeed if it will retain people upon the land and give them good and healthy homes wherein to dwell.

Loans to the amount of eight millions have been granted to Ireland for Housing purposes; and at the present moment the annual charge in respect of the 36 per cent. grant is £81,336. Less than three times this amount is asked for here; surely this demand is not too much!

In October, 1912, a deputation of the National

\*No. 1. The following Balance Sheet for a cottage under the Irish schemes is taken from a report issued by the National Housing and Town Planning Council in October, 1912:—

	£	s.	d.
£170 at £3 5s. ... ..	5	10	6
Less 36 per cent. paid by Government ...	1	19	9
	<hr/>		
		3	10 9
Estimated rent at 1s. 3d. ... ..	3	5	0
	<hr/>		
Loss on rates ... ..	£0	5	9

No. 2. Proposed Balance Sheet for a cottage erected in England under Irish schemes:—

Cost of *land and building*, £178 5s.†

	£	s.	d.
£178 5s. at £3 5s. ... ..	5	15	10
Less 36 per cent. paid by Government ...	2	1	8
	<hr/>		
		3	14 2
Estimated rent at 2s. 6d. ... ..	6	10	0
	<hr/>		
Balance in hand ... ..	2	15	10

†£178 5s. is the average cost of building as given in the White Paper No. 293 issued by the Local Government Board.

Housing and Town Planning Council visited Ireland for the purpose of investigating "the effects of the various Irish Labourers Acts for the provision of cheap dwellings for the labouring classes."\*

The report which this deputation has issued is of great interest, and may be briefly touched upon here. It states that the erection of decent homes in place of the old mud hovels of yore is responsible for a marked improvement in the habits and standards of life of the Irish labourers; "compared with the conditions prevailing thirty years ago, a work of enormous national value has been accomplished." The effect upon health is also most noticeable; for although it is early to rely upon statistics, "the increase in the general vitality and the diminution of zymotic diseases" is apparent.

One of the arguments which is often used in opposition to State-aid for building is that wages will fall, or their further rise certainly be prevented, by any such scheme. The evidence of the deputation on this point is therefore especially interesting. It states that wages have risen during the period over which the erection of cottages has taken place. It is not suggested that the Irish Labourers Acts have been solely responsible for such a rise; many economic facts must be taken into consideration; but at the very least it is perfectly clear that State-grants for housing have not caused wages to fall.

"In County Cork," the deputation reports, "where an exceptionally large number (of cottages) has been built, the rapid increase in the supply of

\*The members of the deputation were W. Thompson (Chairman); W. C. Wilkins (Treasurer); H. Shawcross; H. T. Shawcross; A. W. Skelton, and H. R. Aldridge (Secretary).

cottages has been accompanied by a great increase in wages of from 30 per cent. to 50 per cent. during the past ten years—viz., from eight shillings or nine shillings per week up to twelve shillings. In this case it is apparent that the demand for labour, together with *the independence of the labourers and their consequent activity in demanding better wages*, have been the main factors.”

“That the tenants of the new cottages are now in a more independent position in negotiating terms of employment goes without saying, and the fact that many of them have come from the ‘tied’ cottage of the employer makes the reason for this quite clear.”

It has undoubtedly been proved that in Ireland these Housing schemes have met with great and far-reaching success—the health of the labourer has been improved; the tide of emigration has surely ebbed; whilst wages have risen, and the old mud cabin is disappearing from the face of that fair isle.

If then this system has been so beneficial to Ireland, what danger is there of its application in this country? In the days gone by Ireland’s needs were far greater than England’s. To-day the position is reversed, and England’s are greater than Ireland’s. In Ireland the remedy was delayed too long, and much evil has resulted from the delay; England is fast drifting towards that bourne; it is well that the tide be stemmed before it is too late and the stream has become too fast for stemming.

If in Ireland this remedy has been applied and the disease been cured, why should not the same remedy be applied in England with not dissimilar

results?—surely this is the clear way out of present evils and dangers.

Look at the matter in this light. The proposal is not being advocated from the point of view of the man alone, but also from the standpoint of the State.

It is very necessary, proper, and right, that the men who do so much to make England great, the toilers and the moilers of this land, should be placed in homes which are not insanitary and overcrowded. To the State it is essential; it is vital to national existence. The man is being considered simply as the part—the unit, in the great whole—the State. If the part is rotten, the whole cannot be sound.

If the State is to be supreme it is essential that its men and women should be moulded of the finest human material, that they be tempered as the purest steel. Therefore any expenditure with this aim in view is at once and wholly justified by reference to the needs of the State alone.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FUTURE OF RURAL HOUSING. AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

“The time is ripe, and rotten ripe, for change ;  
Then let it come ; I have no dread of what  
Is called for by the instinct of mankind ;  
Nor think I that God’s world will fall apart  
Because we tear a parchment more or less.”

—J. RUSSELL LOWELL.

It is not contended that the application of a system of State Grants is a wholly economic solution of the Housing problem. It is a palliative. It has been, moreover, stated that the necessity for such a system is to be found in the fact that the wages of agricultural labour are so low that economic rentals cannot be paid. Therefore the Irish system should be applied until the wages of agricultural labour can be raised. A solution of the problem must not be delayed until the wages of labour have been raised, but there is no need for delay in at once trying to effect the economic solution, whilst applying the uneconomic one ; for the sooner the system of grants can be abandoned and a higher margin of wages introduced, the better for the State, and for the labourer himself. Gradually as the wages of labour rise, the grants can be withdrawn, until, as the point is reached where the labourer can pay an economic rent for his cottage,

they will disappear. They will have done their work and will have no further reason for existence.

Now, how is this rise in the labourer's wage to be effected; and are there more means than one of solution?

A Minimum Wage for Agricultural Labourers has strong support from many quarters at the present day; but it is doubtful if it would be possible or even desirable to solve the problem by this means. The difficulties which would be encountered in fixing such a wage are hardly realized except by those who know the extraordinary fluctuations to which the agricultural labourer's wage is subject. In the first place the appellation of agricultural labourer is but a generic term—and the genus comprises many species. It has been shown in an earlier chapter\* that there are ploughmen and horsemen, cattlemen and shepherds upon a farm, in addition to the general labourer, who turns his hand to all odd jobs; and that the shepherd receives a different wage to the ploughman, whilst the general labourer does not earn the same wage as the horseman.

Taking a certain village as a centre with a radius of ten miles all round, it would be found that wages for identical forms of labour vary as much as five shillings a week; from a minimum of thirteen shillings to a maximum of eighteen shillings; and it would also be found that in some cases wages are lower in winter than they are in summer. Moreover, the extras which agricultural labourers receive vary in a remarkable degree. In one village the labourer will earn as much as £3 in addition to his ordinary wages during the month of harvest; whilst his hay money will come to £2

\* See p. 25.



besides. In a neighbouring village no harvest or hay extras will be paid at all. On one farm the shepherd will receive five pence for each lamb he rears successfully; on another farm this custom is unknown. In a few cases the labourer will receive a free cottage on the farm, or on large estates the rent he pays is but nominal.

Now consider the difficulties which must confront the Wages Boards which would be set up to meet these problems. A minimum agricultural wage for the whole kingdom would be impossible with such a variety of local conditions as now exists; conditions which cannot be neglected altogether. A system of District Boards would most certainly be necessary, and then the problem would be indeed hard to solve. The various types of labour would each require a different minimum; and each type would vary even in the same district. If a large farm extended into more than one district, the farmer would be paying the same man different wages for identical work in different fields on the same farm.

Now these difficulties are of administration and could possibly be overcome; but there is another reason why there may be a better solution available than that of the Minimum Wage. A Minimum Wage is at the best but a stereotyped wage—it is in fact not a Minimum but a Maximum Wage; as such it is inelastic, and even if it admits of no decline it certainly prevents a further rise, until fresh legislation is introduced.

Is it economic thus to stereotype wages, and has the Minimum Wage proved a complete success where it has been freely adopted? Both these

questions are very open in the light of experience.

That something must be done to raise the wages of agricultural labour is undoubted, and the Minimum Wage must not be condemned too readily if no other solution may be available. There is a solution, however, which would appear to hold out greater possibilities of success than the Minimum Wage, and that solution is to give every agricultural labourer an opportunity to add to his present wages, an opportunity which would be seized by all but very few.

The golden age of English Agriculture was not the golden age of the farmer and employer alone, but also of the labourer and employé. There is no doubt that the labourer of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was in a far better condition than the labourer of the centuries that have followed. Not necessarily that money wages were higher, but real wages were certainly no less, and, in addition to this, the labourer had access to the soil. It will come as a strange revelation to many that by an Act of Elizabeth four acres of land were to be allotted to every newly-erected cottage throughout the land.\* It is only since the

\*From the "Hertford County Records, Sessions Rolls, 1551-1698":—

- "1657. Presentment that Thomas Baldwin, of Kings Langley, did erect one cottage at Great Gadsden without four acres of land assigned thereto."
- "1662. Presentment of John Tufnell, of Kimpton, for erecting two new cottages in the said parish without having laid to each four acres of freehold land."
- "1676. Petition of the Lord of the Manor of Groves in Sawbridgeworth, the tenants of the same manor and others, that Robert Dowsett, being a very poor man with a great charge of children, who had built a cottage upon the waste soil of the said manor, and was indicted for not laying four acres of land to the same, may not be further proceeded against."

Enclosure Acts of the eighteenth century that the agricultural labourer has become what he is to-day. Gradually he has been driven off the land which his forebears tilled; gradually the commons on which his cows and pigs and geese fed at their leisure, have been enclosed, until to-day few labourers throughout the countryside have one scrap of land to till.

It is too late now to retrace the past. It is impossible to give back to the labourer his rights of commons, his rights of turbary and piscary, and all else; but some recompense can be at least offered him for all that he has lost; an effort can be made to replace him in something like the position he occupied before being despoiled of nearly all his rights and privileges. It is by an application of the system of our ancestors that we can improve the labourer's lot and raise his wages.

Let each agricultural labourer have as of right a piece of land of his own to till—be it an acre or even less—and give him time to till it. From what has been the effect of allotments and Small Holdings there is little doubt that the labourer wants but access to the soil to add considerably to his wages. Those who have never seen what the villager will produce, given his little holding, cannot realize what wonders he can effect. Give a man an acre held by secure tenure on which he can keep his pigs and poultry, and grow his garden produce; give him half a day a week, as we give those who work in our shops, to till it; introduce a system of collection by co-operative means so that he can dispose of his surplus produce, and little more would be necessary to effect a vast change in the position of our labourers.

There is one other thing that should be. The commons which have been stolen from the people in the years that are past cannot now be given back to them; but a certain clause in the Small Holdings Act of 1909, a clause hardly noted but full of possibilities for the future, can be freely applied; that section which gives power to the County Council to take land for common pasturage in the villages;\* for then the labourer could keep his cow as he did of yore. Not only would such a system enable the labourer to increase his wages to a very considerable extent, but his freedom would be so much increased, his self-respect so enormously advanced, that before long he would realize the unnecessary evils of his position, and a general rise in wages would quickly follow. Surely it is better from every point of view to raise the man to a position whence he can demand, and would assuredly obtain, as of right, that which otherwise would be acquired for him without the moral gains which would accrue from his own endeavour.

Just as no economic argument can be brought to support State Grants for Housing, so can little true economic support be urged for a Minimum Wage. It is but a sheer necessity. If then there is a solution ready which is most certainly economic and which would be as efficacious, and has far more to recommend it, than the Minimum Wage, let this solution be applied.

\*42 (1) "The powers of a County Council to acquire land for small holdings or allotments, shall . . . include power to acquire land for the purpose of attaching to small holdings or allotments provided by the Council rights of grazing and other similar rights over the land so acquired, and to acquire for that purpose stints and other alienable common rights of grazing."

A free man in a free house firmly established on the land is the aim in view; an aim which could be attained by this proposed solution.

In support of this theory two quotations from that invaluable book of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, may be given. Referring to a paper written by Arthur Young, and called "An Inquiry into the Propriety of Applying Wastes to the better Maintenance and Support of the Poor," it is stated that:—

"Arthur Young stumbled on the discovery that in those parishes where the cottagers had been able to keep together a tiny patch of property, they had shown a Spartan determination to refuse the refuge of the Poor Law! . . . He then found that enclosure had destroyed with the property of the poor one of the great incentives to industry and self-respect. . . . Before the enclosures the despised commons had enabled the cottager to keep a cow, and this had meant in very many cases all the difference between independence and pauperism. . . . He proposed that twenty millions should be spent in setting up half a million families with allotments and cottages; the fee-simple of the cottage and land to be vested in the parish. . . . 'A man,' he told the landlords '. . . will love his country the better even for a pig.'"\*

The second quotation shows clearly the extraordinary effect of access to the land upon the agricultural labourer.

"A striking instance of successful arable allotments is described by a Mr. Estcourt. . . . The scene was the parish of Long Newnton in

\**The Village Labourer*, pp. 83-84.

Wilts, which contained 140 poor persons, chiefly agricultural labourers, distributed in thirty-two families, and the year was 1800. The price of provisions was very high, and, although all had a very liberal allowance from the poor rate, the whole village was plunged in debt and misery.

“From this hopeless plight the village was rescued by an allotment scheme that Mr. Estcourt established and described. Each cottager who applied was allowed to rent a small quantity of land at the rate of £1 12s. an acre on a fourteen years’ lease. The quantity of land let to an applicant depended on the number in his family, with a maximum of one and a half acres; the tenant was to forfeit his holding if he received poor relief other than medical relief.

“The offer was greedily accepted. . . . A loan of £44 was divided among the tenants to free them from their debts and give them a fresh start. They were allowed a third of their plot on Lady Day, 1801, a second third on Lady Day, 1802, and the remainder on Lady Day, 1803.

“The results, as recorded in 1805, were astonishing. None of the tenants had received any poor relief; all the conditions had been observed; the loan of £44 had long been repaid, and the poor rate had fallen from £212 16s. to £12 6s. They are so much beforehand with the world that it is supposed that it must be some calamity still more severe than any they have ever been afflicted with that could put them under the necessity of ever applying for relief to the parish again. The farmers of this parish allow that they never had their work better done, their servants more able, willing, civil and

sober, and that their property was never so free from depredation as at present.''\*

Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen's Housing Bill contains a provision for the appointment of three Housing Commissioners to attend to this question.

There is no doubt that the action of the Local Government Board has been unsatisfactory, although credit must be given to the Board for a great increase of activity at the end of 1912. Very much, however, could have been done in recent years which has been left undone. The time was opportune, the Legislature was sympathetic on this question; and the whole problem might by this time have been successfully dealt with, and a start made with the inauguration of a new era.

There is, perhaps, no Government Department which could have done more effective, more necessary work in the last six years than the Local Government Board, but the only legislation we have got is an Act in which the rural sections have been overlaid by the urban; an Act which will make conditions not better, but appreciably worse.

Is not the housing personnel of the Board too hide-bound in tradition, too stereotyped in action, to realize the changed circumstances and surroundings which are to be met on every hand? Innovations and experiments in the building of cheap cottages are certainly not encouraged, and very often quashed. The Inspectors of the Board do not realize that the method of arriving at a solution of the cheap cottage problem is by attempting to

\**The Village Labourer*, pp. 156-157.



suit local conditions irrespective of tradition. They prefer to follow the official standards, and cut down expense by cramping accommodation and neglecting conveniences. Thus do they stamp out all initiative and pursue the narrow, but easy, path, which will never lead to a solution.

If the suggested Housing Commissioners would be able to remedy these defects, their creation might be valuable indeed. But it is doubtful if their position would enable them to be of much practical service in this particular. If they are to be under the Board, its personnel and tradition would most probably stereotype their work; in such a position they would have to be in complete accord with the policy of the Board.

It would be difficult to make these Commissioners independent of the Board, for then there would be two authorities often in opposition.

Mr. John Burns has shown himself opposed to the Boscawen Bill. He objected to the financial clauses because there was no necessity to subsidise rural or urban housing, and the proposed grant would be "quite inadequate to secure any substantial housing reform." He further objected to the principle of such a subsidy "on the ground that it was calculated to do permanent harm to housing, by tending to depress rather than encourage local authorities, and by acting as a deterrent to private enterprise."

It is difficult to conceive why such a grant should deter local authorities from carrying out their duties. At the present moment many such bodies are very desirous to build, for they are placed in a most difficult position by the Housing and Town

Planning Act; and will shortly be even more pressed by the Insurance Act. They find that owing to financial considerations they are unable to build in a manner to suit local requirements. Financial aid under these circumstances would surely rather encourage than "depress" local authorities. It has been seen how for many years local bodies, even if they were willing to apply the Housing Acts, were unable to do so because they dared not impose a burden upon the rates for this purpose. It is because of this dreaded burden upon the rates that cottages have not been erected in rural England; why, then, authorities should be depressed by the grant of such aid as would dispense with any projected burden upon the rates it is difficult to understand!

Mr. Burns states that such grants would act as a deterrent to private enterprise. What has private enterprise ever done for the Nation in this matter that there should be any fear to jeopardise its further action to-day? Private enterprise is in part responsible for the present condition of affairs; private enterprise has pulled down of late rather than built up; and utterly failed to meet the calls made upon it.

Private owners must not be blamed in this matter. Even if they would they could not build cottages at an economic rental sufficiently low to come within the reach of those who to-day are crying aloud for homes. Private owners cannot be expected, and must not be allowed, to build at a loss to themselves. But for Mr. Burns to state in face of the overwhelming evidence of want and evil all around, that State assistance must not be

granted because "it would act as a deterrent to private enterprise" will not deter many housing reformers from advocating the possibilities of State aid, nor from ceasing to agitate for its application through respect for the owners of present cottages.

It is, moreover, well worthy of note that where, in the last few years, building has been undertaken under the provisions of the Housing Acts, it is in those very places that private enterprise has afterwards become most active.

Mr. Burns also objects to the appointment of Housing Commissioners as "foreign to the principles of local government; as incompatible with getting local authorities to do their best under their present powers and responsibilities in connection with housing; and as being calculated to derogate from the existing powers of local authorities." Again, Mr. Burns objects on the score of local authorities; surely these bodies require little consideration if the Bill is likely to ameliorate the shocking conditions that exist. Such an objection is, however, of little weight. It was not raised on the appointment of the Small Holding Commissioners, it was not then declared that the appointment of such officials would derogate from the powers of either the Board of Agriculture or the local bodies. The dignity of the County Councils was not considered, only the necessity for the better administration of a particular Act of Parliament. What is the difference between the appointment of special experts to administer a Housing Act or a Small Holdings Act?

The housing reformer cares little for the incompatibility of Housing Commissioners with local

authorities; nor has he much compunction from proceeding on lines "foreign to the principles of local government" so long as he can make some forward step in the problem he is trying to solve.

If little is due to private enterprise, surely still less is due to local authorities. It has been seen how ineffectively these bodies carried out the provisions of the Act of 1890; how, in 1912, only 709 out of 1,757 local authorities have applied any closing orders at all under the Act of 1909; and how, up to May, 1912, only thirty-five rural authorities have applied for loans to build. If local authorities have shown such deplorable inability or unwillingness to act in the past, surely it is not necessary to wait and see if they will awaken to their responsibilities in the future, and "do their best under their present powers and responsibilities"—powers which they are most loth to use, responsibilities which they have either utterly ignored or done their utmost to evade.

Mr. Burns states that not only does he object to the principle of such appointments, but that they are unnecessary. "At the present moment," he says, "the Local Government Board have a special Housing Department, consisting of fifty expert officers, all of whom could be utilised in case of necessity in connection with this particular problem."

If these experts have been at work attempting to solve the problem, it is impossible to congratulate them on the success of their efforts; if they have failed to be thus engaged, surely it is time some other remedy were applied.

For many years we have been engaged, in my own district, in using every effort to get the Housing Acts put into operation. During the whole of that long period no assistance of any kind was offered by the Board; not a single expert was ever sent down to report on local conditions and needs, nor to try and assist in putting the Acts into operation—Acts for which the Board itself was responsible.

The Small Holdings Commissioners have been successful in furthering the better administration of the Small Holdings Act because they are appointed to localities; they understand the needs of their respective counties; are continuously in touch with their areas; and are, moreover, easy of access to those requiring their assistance. The Housing experts of the Local Government Board have been of little use because they are purely officials of the Board at headquarters. They are not acquainted with any local needs or conditions; they are not appointed for the purpose of discovering evils and thus remedying them; their duties are apparently largely clerical and very stereotyped.

Two years ago an Inquiry was held by the Local Government Board preliminary to the granting of a loan for building under the Housing and Town Planning Act. The official sent down by the Board may have been an excellent man in his way, but he certainly did not deal with the question in the manner in which it must be approached if any really useful work is to be accomplished. The purport of his questioning was not so much to discover the local needs and conditions, or whether the suggested scheme was the best suited to the particular

requirements of the district; but how to cut down expense; an admirable desire in itself, but not the real business of a Housing Act.

Blocks were vetoed and a row ordered; slates were substituted for tiles, although the saving was quite small; a cooking range in the scullery was cut out, thus leaving only the one in the living-room. The Board would not pass the scheme, he insisted, unless the cost was reduced to a minimum. Thus, far from urging and aiding the application of the Act, this particular official made its working even more difficult. It may be that the Board insists upon this punctiliousness on the part of its officials with regard to the cutting down of cost, but if so it only strengthens the contention that the present experts are not the men for the purpose required.

Experts in this matter are not men whose knowledge lies in the building of a house or in the laying of a drain, but those who have lived in the villages, who know from long contact the evils that exist, the remedies that are required. The needs of each locality will vary with local customs, rates of wages and other matters vital to the success of housing schemes; all of which matters are unknown to, and therefore ignored by, the officials of the Board.

For success, the administrators of Housing Schemes must be in sympathy with such schemes; and such people are not the present type of official, but persons whose experience has lain in actual contact with the problems they will be required to solve.

The Boscawen Bill, if not dead, does not evince great signs of life; and it would appear as if the

reforms which are desired must be looked for in other directions.

One would almost despair of any immediate action were it not for the utterance of one who has realized to the full that the future regeneration of the Nation lies in the homes of its people, and especially in the cottages of our rural population.

In an interview on the 13th May, 1912, Mr. Lloyd George said:—

“Have you ever considered how much depends upon housing? Housing means health, a real chance for the children, a blow at indulgence in liquor, and, in addition, all the decencies of life. We must clear out the slum, whether in city or village, or mining urban district. We cannot tolerate the slum any longer. And if, from any source, capital is found for housing, it will mean just the demand for labour which will be best calculated to level up wages in the village. Once this is effected, the figure for wages will not fall again.”

If the Housing Question is to be taken up by Mr. Lloyd George himself, there need be little fear that he will not deal with it in a broad and statesmanlike manner. No half measures will satisfy him, and if once he places his hand to this work, he will not rest until the problem is well advanced towards solution. There is no one more fitted than Mr. Lloyd George to conduct a great housing campaign throughout the country, and to initiate effective legislation. He is the greatest social reformer that English political life has ever known; he himself has lived amongst the evils and knows the fearful toll which they exact. His power of illumination is supreme; and what other subject is



there more open to such treatment than the tale of human suffering and woe which these pages have attempted to unfold?

The future lies still on the knees of the Gods. But was not the Delphic oracle inspired by knowledge denied to the mere inhabitant of the Athenian and Bœotian State? May it not well be in this latter-day world that a modern oracle has given utterance, not inspired by the phantom whisperings of the Gods of yore, but by actual knowledge of the plans of those in whose hands the future destiny of this great cause now lies!

Another Housing Bill has lately been produced. It has been prepared by the Rural League, and is intituled "A Bill to provide for the better Housing of the Working Classes in Rural Areas." This is the first Bill dealing exclusively with the rural problem; and so dissimilar are the needs of town and country, that it might well be necessary to deal separately with each. The Housing and Town Planning Act was primarily introduced as a rural measure, but during its passage through the House, the town influence so monopolised the debates that the urban clauses gained at the expense of the rural; and the Bill as an Act became of little value to the villages.

In this respect, then, the Rural League's Bill might be more valuable than Sir Arthur Griffith Boscawen's Bill, which is intituled simply a "Housing of the Working Classes Bill." The lines on which both these measures proceed are not dissimilar in their general aspects. Both provide for a separate Department of the Local Government Board, in the form of three Commissioners, to deal

with housing, these Commissioners to be invested with plenary powers. The Rural League's Bill provides that one Commissioner shall possess the qualifications of a Medical Officer of Health; another shall "have had large experience in the erection and management of cottage dwellings in rural areas"; whilst the third "shall be a person possessed of a knowledge of agricultural conditions." The Boscawen Bill provides that the one Commissioner shall possess the medical qualification; whilst of the other two, one shall be a rural expert, the other an urban one.

Both Bills further provide for a Treasury grant in aid of building. But whilst the sum allowed under the Boscawen Bill is £500,000 per annum; the amount under the Rural League's Bill is only £200,000; the difference, of course, arising from the fact that whilst the former is rural and urban, the latter is rural only.

So far then the Bills proceed on similar lines. But in the details divergencies arise; and it is in details that the Rural League's Bill would be inevitably doomed. Power is given to the Commissioners to act in the place of defaulting authorities; and it is made compulsory "to provide cottage accommodation for any labourer in occupation of any cottage closed or demolished under the provisions" of the Bill. So far so good, but it is Clause 8 which vitiates the whole Bill and destroys its utility as a measure of social reform. It provides that before advances are made to local authorities for building purposes, grants shall be offered to owners of land for the erection, "alteration, extension or improvement of any of his

existing cottages for the labouring population." The money so advanced, which may not exceed £200 per cottage, is to be repayable in  $68\frac{1}{2}$  years, by an annuity of £3 5s. per cent. per annum. All rent shall go in such repayment, and then 70 per cent. of the residue shall come from the Development Fund and 30 per cent. from the owners. Subject to such payment the land and cottage will be the property of the owner, and no rates or taxes are to be paid in respect of such land and cottages "during the continuance of the annuity." Moreover, the rents shall not be "exceeding eighteen pence a week for any cottage," and the owner is to attach "where suitable land is available" a garden not exceeding a quarter of an acre.

This, in brief, is the purport of Clause 8 of the Bill. What would it mean? Not only a perpetuation of, but a great increase in, that system of tied cottages referred to elsewhere; a system which is inimical to the welfare of the agricultural population and to the Nation as a whole. It is one of the complaints of landowners at the present day that they cannot afford to build cottages for their labourers; this Bill would give them exactly what they desire—money on easy terms wherewith to build. Landowners would flock eagerly to borrow money from the National Exchequer to retain their labourers bound to the soil and thus still further retard the rural emancipation which would prove of such great advantage to the labourer, and, if he but only knew, to the landowner and farmer as well. If the State is to grant money for building cottages it must not be as an endowment of the landowners, but for the benefit of the whole population. It is

one of the great advantages of cottages owned by local authorities that the labourer would have complete security of tenure so long as he paid his rent and did not damage the fabric; that he would not lose his home because he lost his job; that he would be independent of his employer. The provision that the rent shall in no case exceed one shilling and sixpence a week is bad economically and socially. It is as impossible to stereotype rent as wages. Local conditions and customs go far towards fixing rents at the present time, which cannot suddenly be altered by legislation. The rent paid by a Durham labourer receiving twenty-two shillings per week will not be the same as that paid by a Dorset or Oxfordshire labourer with twelve shillings to fifteen shillings. The former can well afford to pay more than one shilling and sixpence, whilst such a rent would about meet the needs of the latter. In many cases the labourer receiving the higher wage is quite as badly housed as the other. The housing conditions in many of the colliery districts, especially in South Wales, are worse than those in many other parts of the country; yet these men earn on an average more than twenty-two shillings a week; and would, therefore, be able to pay far more than one shilling and sixpence for their homes. Under this Bill their need would almost certainly not be met. Private owners would not have the incentive to build, and it is very doubtful if local authorities would do so.

Such a fixed rent would certainly tend to lower wages. The landowner would be able to house his labourer at a fixed rental, and wages would accom-

moderate themselves accordingly. Wages only rise under the pressure of surrounding circumstances; and, if such pressure is removed, a fall is bound to result; or at least all further rise would be checked. It has already been urged that it is essential to the future of the agricultural labourer that his wages should be increased, as they are bound to be before very long by economic causes. This Bill would check that present tendency, and therefore should be opposed.

The necessity for the clause that not more than a quarter of an acre may be attached to each cottage "where suitable land is available" is not very apparent, unless as a further protection to the landowner. It is essential that in future building schemes in rural England a sufficiency of land should go with each cottage; this is the greatest boon that can be conferred on the agricultural labourer; more than that, it is surely his right. The excuse that no suitable land is available could, and would, be used in many cases by owners not desirous that their labourers should have land of their own to till; and such men are unfortunately by no means few.

This projected Bill is then of little practical use for dealing with the question, and the agricultural labourer will be none the worse if the measure never sees the day.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSION

“New times demand new measures and new men ;  
The world advances, and in time outgrows  
The laws that in our fathers’ day were best ;  
And, doubtless, after us, some purer scheme  
Will be shaped out by wiser men than we,  
Made wiser by the steady growth of truth.”

—J. RUSSELL LOWELL.

AN endeavour has now been made to present the whole problem of Rural Housing. The conditions that exist and the result of those conditions upon the countryside ; the action which Parliament has so far taken to deal with the question ; and certain suggestions and proposals for further legislation ; have been fully dealt with.

The idea has not been to pile up instance upon instance of squalor and misery, of vice and immorality—although, unfortunately, such evidence is available on every hand. Nor has any attempt been made to accumulate statistics and reports, so overpowering and convincing in their evidence of evil and distress, that no refutation would have been possible. Rather has the whole broad aspect of things been outlined as it appears to one who lives amongst the conditions of which he writes, and who has seen the evils which he has described.

This has been done in the belief that, if the mind of England could be made to understand, and the eyes of England made to see what is really taking place on every hand, the conscience of the whole community would not fail to be touched, and the justice inherent in the whole Nation would not tolerate the continuance of a condition of affairs, not only disastrous to the whole Nation, but terrible for the sufferers themselves.

This result can be the better and more easily attained by a broad human statement of the case than by the incontrovertible, yet oft paralyzing, argument of bald facts and figures, however damning such facts and figures well may be.

As I write I look out upon the hillside, and I am reminded of a day last spring; a day on which I somehow fully realized the contrast in all around.

It was the first morning to herald the coming months of summer; a morning that brings hope and happiness to almost every living thing. There was a gentle fold in the earth's surface, and I could not see what lay in the hollow below; but beyond this hidden dell the ground sloped gradually upwards to the farther crest.

Nearest to the valley's base stretched a broad field of grain; the seed had just come through, and a light green film hid the earth beneath. Beyond this was a close of pasture-land, and its surface shone in alternate lines of darker and of lighter green; for the roller had but lately been at work upon it. To the hill-top stretched the fields of arable, their soft dull browns rippled by the changing lights, and in them the seed had not yet given birth. Beyond, cresting the hill and shutting out



all further view, the woodland lay. The bare stems of the trees stood out against the brown fields at their base, with here and there a faint glimmer from the bark of a silver beech, relieving the soft monotony. A change had but lately come over the aspect of those trees. A reddish haze was all about their branches; the first sign of the spring leaf, which, before long, would convert the varied browns into various greens.

The sky overhead was of a deep tone of blue, more the blue of the summer than of the spring; broken into little patches and fragments by the fleecy clouds scurrying, at no slow-moving pace, across the sun, changing with every moment of time the light upon the fields below. Now the pasture-land was half in light and half in shadow; now it glowed in the full light of the sun; now it was dull, for a little cloud had changed all from light to darkness.

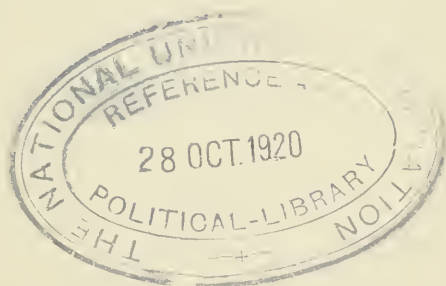
The soft caressing breezes that played around made this spring morn a thing of memory. The face of the earth was beautiful to behold. But in the hollow at my feet there lay the abode of man—for, although it could not be seen, I knew what the valley contained—the homes of men which were blots on the beauty of Nature.

Must these things always go together? Must one always find in the most perfect corners of this most beauteous countryside that which deprives these places of half their glory?

This cannot, must not, endure. Rather let us look forward to a time—a time not so far distant as it may appear—when Nature and Man shall work in perfect harmony; when the glory of the one

shall not be blurred by the shame of the other; when the son of man shall be as well cared for as the foal, the calf, and the lamb; when the children of humanity shall be as well housed as the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, as the fox in his hole or the rabbit in his warren.

And while we do this thing; while we look forward to changes in the future which cannot be so long delayed; let us "Go on living whilst we may, striving with whatsoever pain and labour needs must be to build up little by little the new day of fellowship and rest and happiness."



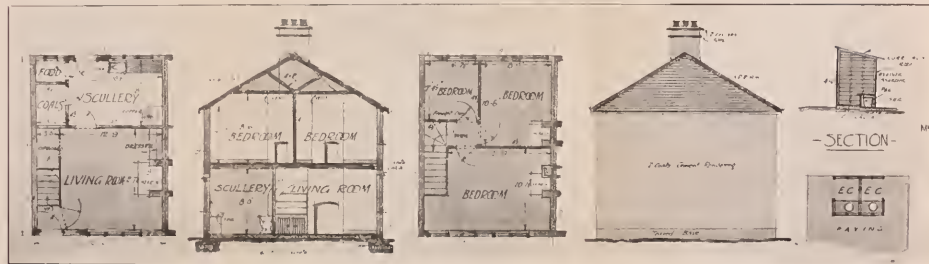
SEVEN COTTAGES  
ERECTED IN THE  
PARISH OF  
KING'S LANGLEY.

See Appendix A, p. 133



THE ARCHITECT'S  
PLAN of these Cottages  
is given below.

TIDGEMAN, M.S.A.,  
Surveyor to the Hemel Hempstead Rural  
District Council.



Ground Floor Plan

Section.

First Floor Plan.

End Elevation.

Plan of E.C.'s

## APPENDIX A

### A HOUSING SCHEME IN OPERATION\*

THE following scheme has been sanctioned by the Local Government Board, and the cottages have been erected. Seven cottages in a terrace; containing each :—

A Living Room, 12ft. 9in. by 12ft. 9in.

Bedroom No. 1, 12ft. 9in. by 10ft. 1½in.

Bedroom No. 2, 10ft. 6in. by 8ft. 9in.

Bedroom No. 3, 7ft. 4½in. by 6ft. 7½in.

Scullery, 11ft. 10½in. by 8ft., fitted with iron copper, with steam outlet into flue.

All external walls of 9in. solid brickwork, rendered in two coats with cement to a finished thickness of one inch.

Roofs, covered with approved Penrhyn slates.

Site nine-tenths of an acre.

Garden of 15½ poles to each cottage.

Total loan sanctioned by the Local Government Board, £1,297 10s.; building, £1,127 10s.; land, £170 (land £160, charges £10). Loan for 60 years on the building and 80 years on the land.

### BALANCE SHEET.

#### *Estimated Receipts.*

	£	s.	d.
Seven cottages at 4s. 6d per week : £11			
14s. per annum × seven ... ..	81	18	0
Less empties and losses (2½ per cent.) ...	2	1	0
	<hr/>		
	79	17	0
Charge on Rates ... ..	0	2	5
	<hr/>		
	£79	19	5
	<hr/>		

\* See plan and photograph on inset.

*Estimated Expenditure.*

	£	s.	d.
Repayment of Loan (Principal and Interest) on land, £170 at £3 14s. 9½d. per cent.	6	7	1
Repayment of Loan (Principal and Interest) on buildings, £1,127 10s. at £4 os. 2½d. per cent. ... ..	45	4	2
Rates : net value of cottages, say £7s. 2s. 6d. each, 5s. 4d. in the £. Less 30 per cent. compounding ... ..	10	0	1
Taxes, estimated at 9s. each, 9s. × seven ...	3	3	0
Insurance ... ..	0	15	9
Water supply, 11s. 4d. per annum × seven	3	19	4
Repairs and Maintenance ... ..	10	10	0
Supervision and Collection of Rents ... ..			Nil
Contingencies ... ..			Nil
	<hr/> £79 19 5 <hr/>		

These cottages have now been ready for habitation during a period of nearly three months; and only two out of the seven are so far occupied. The reason of this is because the rent of four shillings and sixpence is beyond the capacity of the agricultural labourers in the village to pay.

Surely this actual example of the failure of the Housing and Town Planning Act in rural England is but additional and weighty evidence of the need of some other solution which will enable lower rents to be charged; and the solution, as has been shown in this book, is to be found in the application of State grants for Rural Housing.

## APPENDIX B

### AN INQUIRY INTO THE HOUSING CONDITIONS OF SOME ENGLISH COUNTIES

An investigation of great interest into the Housing conditions in Rural Areas was conducted last year by the National Land and Home League; an investigation all the more valuable in that the statistics collected were directly obtained from the Rural District Councils themselves.

In May, 1911, when the Boscawen Housing Bill was before the House of Commons, a circular letter was sent to the Clerks of the Rural District Councils of England and Wales, asking them to reply to three questions so far as they applied to the parishes in the areas under their control.

- Q. 1. "Are cottages for labourers required in any of the Parishes in your District?"
- Q. 2. "Could the Council build cottages for labourers without causing a burden on the rates?"
- Q. 3. "Is the Council in favour of assistance and a grant from some Central Housing Authority, so that the Council may satisfy the demand for cottages without overburdening the rate-payers?"

There are 655 Rural District Councils in England and Wales, and by October replies had been received from 332, or just over half, of these bodies.

In thirty-one out of forty English Counties, half, or more, of the Rural District Councils in those counties replied to the circular; in the other nine, as likewise in the Welsh Counties, the replies received were too scanty to be of value for statistical purposes.



The replies of these thirty-one Councils are here given in tabular form :—

COUNTY.*	No. of R.D.C's. in County.	No. of R.D.C's. which have replied.	Replies to					
			Q. 1.		Q. 2.		Q. 3.	
			Yes.	No.	Yes.	No.	Yes.	No.
Cambridgeshire ...	11	7	5	1	0	6	5	0
Cheshire ...	12	9	8	0	0	8	5	0
Cornwall ...	15	7	4	2	2	4	5	1
Derbyshire ...	15	7	5	2	0	7	4	1
Devonshire ...	18	12	12	0	0	12	10	1
Dorsetshire ...	12	7	5	0	0	6	4	1
Durham ...	14	10	2	7	2	4	4	2
Essex ...	17	11	9	1	0	10	8	1
Gloucestershire ...	21	10	4	4	0	7	3	2
Hampshire ...	23	13	4	5	0	8	6	1
Herefordshire ...	10	5	4	1	0	5	4	1
Kent ...	21	15	8	7	1	12	8	4
Lancashire ...	20	13	2	10	0	9	3	3
Leicestershire ...	13	7	1	6	0	7	0	2
Lincolnshire ...	20	9	7	1	0	8	7	0
Middlesex ...	4	2	2	0	0	2	1	0
Monmouthshire ...	6	4	2	1	0	3	1	0
Norfolk ...	20	16	15	1	1	15	13	0
Northamptonshire	18	8	4	3	0	5	5	0
Nottinghamshire	11	5	3	2	0	5	3	1
Shropshire ...	17	8	3	5	0	8	2	1
Somersetshire ...	17	10	7	1	0	6	5	0
Staffordshire ...	19	11	4	6	0	10	6	1
Suffolk ...	18	11	10	0	0	10	10	0
Surrey ...	9	6	4	1	0	5	2	2
Wiltshire...	18	14	10	3	1	12	4	3
Worcestershire ...	14	9	3	5	0	7	4	0
Yorkshire :								
East Riding ...	12	7	5	0	0	5	4	0
North „ ...	21	9	3	5	0	8	1	2
West „ ...	29	18	8	10	0	14	8	3

\* In many cases the individual replies will be seen not to tally with the totals. This is due to the fact that many Councils did not reply to all the three questions, but very often only to one or, at most two.

The total figures for the inquiry are :—

In answer to *Question 1*, as to whether a dearth of cottages existed, 182 Councils say “Yes,” 107 Councils say “No.”

In answer to *Question 2*, as to whether cottages could be erected without placing a burden upon the rates, eight Councils say "Yes," 261 Councils say "No."

In answer to *Question 3*, as to whether a State-grant for building would be welcomed, 169 Councils say "Yes," thirty-nine Councils say "No."

It will be noticed that the dearth of cottages is greatest in the agricultural counties; and it is interesting to look more closely into some of these; and by means of reports of the Medical Officers of Health it is possible to get very complete data for many of these counties.

In Norfolk there are twenty Rural Districts. Fifteen Councils admit a dearth, and the only District which states that no dearth exists is known to be no better off in housing accommodation than the other fifteen. Of the four Councils which have not replied, one is very largely an Urban District, and of the other three, the Medical Officer of Health for Downham reports that in one parish there are "eight houses (in which) there are no windows in the rear and only a front door; eighteen houses are without staircases, the approach to bedrooms is by step-ladders." In the Forehoe District conditions are even worse; whilst the Local Government Board wrote to the Mitford Rural District Council in October, 1910, that "the Board regard with great concern the existence of these unsatisfactory conditions, and they desire to urge upon the Rural District Council the necessity for immediate action under the Housing Acts."

In Suffolk, eleven Councils out of eighteen reply, and ten state that there is a dearth of cottages in their areas.

The reports of the Medical Officers of Health for five out of the remaining seven areas show that in those areas also a dearth exists. At Bosmere the housing accommodation "is exceptionally bad"; at Cosford the dearth prevents overcrowding being dealt with; at Hartismere if closing orders were enforced the people would be driven "either out of the district or into the

workhouse." At Samford "housing accommodation is insufficient"; and in Woodbridge "an exceptional number of houses are in an unsatisfactory condition."

In Essex, out of eleven Councils which reply nine admit a dearth; whilst of the only district which reports a sufficiency its own Medical Officer of Health reports that "the provision of better houses . . . is one of the most important requirements of the District." Of those six Councils which have not replied, there is in Billericay "not a parish in which cottages are not wanted; were it not that cottages are so scarce . . . a much larger number would be condemned and really require to be closed." In Dunmow there is a dearth, whilst as to Tendring, the Medical Officer reports that if he "represented every house that might be considered unfit for habitation and got closing orders, we should soon be without sufficient houses for the people to live in."

In Somersetshire, of the ten out of seventeen Councils which reply, seven state a dearth. Of the seven Councils which have not replied, the Medical Officer for Keynsham says that in 185 houses (more than half those examined) there are "only two or less bedrooms, a condition which often leads to moral overcrowding." In Langport there "is a distinct lack of cottage accommodation." Of Long Ashton the Medical Officer states that he "has repeatedly drawn attention to the insufficiency of house accommodation for the working classes," whilst in Wells "houses with more bedroom accommodation are required."

In Dorset seven out of twelve Councils reply, and of these seven five state that a dearth of cottages exists. Of the other five, the Medical Officer of Health for Sturminster states that the housing accommodation "is anything but satisfactory . . . in several instances impossible to remedy owing to dearth of good cottages"; whilst his colleague for Sherborne remarks that "the population has increased and the number of inhabited houses has slightly decreased."

In Surrey, of the six Councils out of nine which reply, four admit a dearth; one a sufficiency; of this last, the

Medical Officer reports that "it is exceedingly rare to come across an unoccupied cottage; the demand exceeds the supply." Of the remaining three Councils, the officer for Farnham reports that "cottage accommodation is still badly needed"; for Guildford "that there is great scarcity of cottages in one district"; and for Hambledon that "house accommodation is still much needed."

It will thus be seen that there is a dearth of cottage accommodation in every district of Norfolk; in sixteen out of eighteen districts in Suffolk; in thirteen out of seventeen in Essex; in eleven out of seventeen in Somerset; in nine out of twelve in Dorset; and in eight out of nine in Surrey.

So much for the evidence of dearth afforded by the inquiry—a dearth covering at least one-third of the Rural District Areas in the country.

The evidence obtained in the replies to the second question, as to whether cottages can be built without placing a burden upon the rates, is of great interest.

It has been seen how, out of 289 Councils replying to this question, only eight state their ability to build self-supporting cottages.

Of these eight Councils, five have essayed to put their theory into practice, with the following results:—

At Effingham the estimated expenditure exceeds the estimated income by £1; at Henstead by £3; at Saint Germans by £9 on one scheme and by £3 on a second scheme; whilst at Hitchin income exceeds expenditure by £1; and at Chester-le-Street the balance is also £1. In every one of these five cases it will be found that "the general expenses," will be borne by the district or the parish as the case may be.\*

This reduces the eight assenting Councils to five; and in many of the schemes where estimated expenditure and income are made to balance there will most probably be found a deficit when the scheme comes fully into operation.

The replies to *Question 3*, asking the Councils whether they are in favour of State-grants for housing,

\*See White Paper No. 293.

afford strong support to the remedy advocated in this book—for it has been seen that 169 out of 208 Councils favour such a system. The Councils have clearly realized that they cannot build cottages to meet the dearth and replace those condemned at a rental which the agricultural labourer can pay and which will, at the same time, result in a self-supporting scheme. The Councils, therefore, are in full accord with a scheme of State-grants which would enable them to enforce the provisions of the Housing and Town Planning Act as the Legislature intended them to be enforced.

## APPENDIX C

### SOME EXTRACTS FROM VARIOUS MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH'S REPORTS ON HOUSING IN RURAL AREAS

BEDFORDSHIRE : *Biggleswade*.

"THE cottages and rooms are usually small, and overcrowding exists to a considerable extent. . . . One frequently finds a bedroom is occupied by three or four adult members of the same family of both sexes, the room being merely divided by an incomplete curtain."

"I have during the last four years drawn the Council's attention to the scarcity of good accommodation for the working classes in many of our villages. What I have previously stated I repeat again this year. I quite realize that the great hindrance to private enterprise building better cottages, is the inability for the agricultural labourer to pay a rent which would give the builder a fair interest on his outlay. The Council have also realized this, and are erecting six cottages, under the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909, at Sharnbrook. These cottages are nearly completed, and are let at a rent of four shillings per week. They are about to be occupied by the better class labourers, such as gardeners and mechanics.

"The agricultural labourer is unable to pay this rental, and if the erection of cottages is to become more general, some means must be provided for letting them at a lower rate than four shillings. To accommodate this class a cottage must not exceed two shillings and sixpence per week, and must have a garden allotment of such a size as will provide for the necessities of the family.

"I put forward two suggestions for attaining this object : firstly, to forego the rates levied on cottages, or

to have them assessed at a greatly reduced rate; secondly, to urge the Government to accept a lower rate of interest and extend the period of repayment. During the last year the Inspector made a house-to-house inspection of at least one village every month, and it was so arranged that during the winter months when the days were short, the villages round and adjacent to Bedford were visited, and during the longer days of the summer months those on the extreme boundaries received his attention. The village selected for the month's inspection was again visited next month and re-visited the following month until all nuisances had been abated. The villages were taken in rotation until all had been inspected. It will take about three years to complete this house-to-house inspection."

BERKSHIRE : *Easthampstead*.

"The problem of providing satisfactory accommodation for the working classes, especially when there are families, is rapidly becoming urgent in this district. Many of the old cottages are falling into a state of disrepair. The cost of renovating them so as to be in accordance with modern requirements in a large number of cases would be out of proportion to the value of the property. It is not surprising, then, that the owners decide to close them voluntarily and are unwilling to build others on account of the small return yielded in rent."

CAMBRIDGESHIRE : *Caxton and Arrington*.

"The smaller tenements are often not desirable as residences, and were other good cottages available, many of them would be certified as unsuitable for habitation, but until new cottages are built, if the undesirable ones were closed, some of the villages would be depopulated.

"I do not think there are a dozen labourers' cottages in the entire district that possess a bedroom seven feet from floor to ceiling."

The County Medical Officer of Health : "There can be no doubt that the figures given regarding cases of overcrowding of dwellings which came to light in 1911



afford no index to the actual conditions in that respect, especially when taken in conjunction with the frequently expressed opinions of the Medical Officers of Health as to the pressing need for dwellings with greater bedroom accommodation. On this point Dr. Armistead gives a useful table showing the number of bedrooms in 365 houses inspected in 1911 in Linton Rural District, from which it appears that 57 and 226 houses had one and two bedrooms respectively, whilst 70 and twelve houses had three or more than three. Thus the proportion of houses with less than three bedrooms was no less than 77 per cent., and there is no reason to suppose that the Linton District differs materially from the rest of the rural portion of the county in this respect. . . . It is clear that though progress is being made as regards rendering existing dwellings habitable, there are other houses which cannot be put into reasonably habitable condition, and which are not closed simply because there is no other accommodation for tenants who would be displaced. . . . It may be argued that a declining population in certain rural districts is a sufficient excuse for inaction on the part of the District Council in seeing that healthy dwellings are provided for the working classes, in the absence of such provision being made by private enterprise. Such a decline is, however, due to the excess of emigration over the natural increase of population, and it is clearly realized that one powerful factor in producing this exodus to the towns is the insufficiency in the number of houses for labourers who are therefore unable to marry and settle down in their own locality. An active housing policy is therefore directly in the interest of a given rural district quite apart from the question of moral obligation or statutory requirement."

CHESHIRE : *Nantwich.*

"If only a sufficiency of cottages were provided at a reasonable rent, I am of opinion that the problem of rural depopulation would be in a fair way for solution."

CUMBERLAND : *Bootle.*

"In two parishes only can it be really be said that houses are adequate, although there is little or no over-

crowding, but one never finds a cottage standing empty."

DURHAM : *Chester-le-Street*.

" Out of 812 houses inspected in nine townships, 469 were scheduled as ' in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation.' "

" The scarcity of houses in this parish (Harraton) is very much marked. . . . There are certainly tenants for any number of houses up to or even over 200. There are besides a number of back-to-back houses which should be closed, and I am well within the mark when I put these insanitary houses at 100."

" Insanitary property abounds in this district, and the difficulties of housing present . . . an almost insuperable barrier to the closing of houses obviously unfit for human habitation."

ESSEX : *Billericay*.

" I went on the principle of dealing with the worst cottages first as far as we could judge. There were forty-nine cottages inspected last year, in which nothing short of pulling down and entirely rebuilding could make them habitable, and besides these there were discovered forty-four cases of overcrowding, taking the legal minimum of the Local Government Board (*i.e.*, 300 cubic feet of air space for each adult) as a basis. In nearly all these cases it was almost impossible to abate the overcrowding, as there were no other cottages available for the tenants to go into.

" It must be borne in mind that, were it not that cottages are so scarce throughout the district, a much larger number would be condemned and really require to be closed.

" The lack of proper cottage accommodation is not only producing a weakly, unhealthy race of children, but it is also driving many of the younger members of the working classes away from the district into the large towns, there often only to swell the number of the unemployed while the country districts are wanting workers. Many young people are unable to get married and make a home for themselves because there are

no cottages to be had. The crux of the whole question seems to be the financial one. Are these cottages to be erected out of a district rate, or is each parish to provide for its own needs? I fear that many of those in authority in the district are more apt to consider the rates and the ratepayers than the hard-working labourer, who has to toil hard and have his health and that of his family undermined by unhealthy, damp, insanitary, and unsafe dwellings."

*Chelmsford.*

"Owners served with notices threatened to evict their tenants and close the cottages, and it is now obvious that little can be done with the old cottages until new ones are provided. . . . There are many cottages barely fit for human habitation, and where the owners would rather close than radically improve, and the tenants cannot find other houses into which to move. . . . In every parish there is a want of cottages with three bedrooms, and, in consequence of this, overcrowding occasionally occurs. Immorality is fostered and infectious disease spread. In many parishes young people are being driven away because they wish to marry and cannot obtain a cottage in which to reside. . . . One farmer had a cottage to let and had twenty-eight applicants for it."

The County Medical Officer of Health.—"In the majority of the parishes in rural Essex the systematic inspection has revealed the following conditions :—

1. "That many unsatisfactory cottages are occupied by families who are able and willing to pay more rent if they could obtain larger or more commodious cottages.

2. "That many cottages are occupied which are barely fit for human habitation, and which owners would rather close than radically improve, and which continue to be occupied merely because there are no better houses into which the tenants can remove.

3. "That there is a general want of cottages with three bedrooms, and in consequence of this, overcrowd-

ing from time to time occurs, immorality is fostered and infectious diseases spread.

4. "That in many parishes young people are being driven away because they wish to marry and cannot obtain a cottage in which to reside. That when not driven away the age at marriage is considerably increased."

5. "That employers of grooms, gardeners, etc., prefer unmarried men or men without families, on account of the difficulty of obtaining suitable cottage accommodation. This is decreasing the birth-rate."

6. "That many farmers complain of the inadequacy of the cottage accommodation, and attribute to this cause a difficulty in finding labour."

7. "That occasionally labourers have to reside at a considerable distance from their work, causing grave inconvenience and loss of time to them and their employers."

8. "That old age pensioners and elderly people retiring from active labour seek cottages in the rural areas, and if they obtain them they frequently displace the actual labourers and accentuate the demand for cottages."

9. "That in the parishes near towns the artisans employed in the towns are seeking cottages and offering a higher rent than the present occupiers are paying, and as a result rural rents are being raised and the local labourers driven away."

"Owners threaten to close the cottages and eject the tenants if any undue pressure is put upon them to spend a considerable amount of money in making the places really habitable."

"Cottage rents in towns are often preposterously high, and to get more elbow room and more fresh air, a man desires to reside outside the Urban area. He then competes with the local labourer, offers a higher rent, gets the best cottages and causes the rents to increase all round. . . . The local opposition to the provision of cottages in the country for the town artisan is

surprising. The local labourer objects because his advent has raised rents and the wealthier classes object because the artizan's intrusion has interfered with their privacy, and because his presence may infuse a little more manliness and independence into the local labourer, who through long ages has had instilled into him his duty to continue satisfied with the conditions in which God has placed him. The one thing worth encouraging in Rural areas is the provision of decent cottages at a reasonable rent for the artizans employed in the towns. The more town and country come into contact the better for both, and the better for the whole country."

"The greatest difficulty of all is that of convincing the country that the best way of securing a healthy and contented working class is by securing for them decent houses and decent conditions under which they can live. Private doles and parliamentary doles, however disguised, are mere temporary palliatives, never reaching the root of the disease, or if they do so it is only to increase the vigour of its growth and to make the last conditions worse than the first. The problem is a national one and a permanent or effectual solution will never be found while the administration of Housing Acts is left to local authorities and while deficits have to be met out of local rates."

GLOUCESTERSHIRE : *Stow-on-the-Wold*.

"Overcrowding occurs in many instances, ventilation is bad . . . the window space being insufficient, and the bedrooms having no fireplaces. Usually the bedrooms lead into each other. It is not at all uncommon to find the windows fixed."

HAMPSHIRE : *Hartley-Wintney*.

"Cottages let at a rental within the reach of an agricultural labourer are very few ; to close even some means driving the tenants to the workhouse. There are a number of cottages that should be closed, but . . . where are the present tenants to go, there are no spare cottages within their means?"

LEICESTERSHIRE : *Market Bosworth*.

"Up to the end of the year 558 dwelling-houses had

been inspected, and in these defects were found in 355 instances."

LINCOLNSHIRE : *Crowland*.

"The Housing of the district is not satisfactory . . . a number of houses ought to be closed, but at the present every house . . . is occupied, including one which was previously closed. This was taken possession of by the present occupier, and up to the present time the Rural District Council have not been able to eject occupier and family." In another case of a ruinous cottage "the occupier has been given notice to quit, but there is nowhere for him to go."

*Grantham*.

"In the discharge of duties required by the Housing and Town Planning Act, the Sanitary Inspector, who was appointed as the officer under the Act, has made inspections in twelve of the parishes during the year, and reported upon 100 houses, the state of repair of some of which was exceptionally bad.

"Eleven houses were closed under the Act, statutory measures having to be instituted in the case of five of the houses to remove the tenants. Five houses were closed by the owners, and three empty ones were not to be re-used. In regard to the other 81 houses, structural repairs were required in some cases, whilst in others sanitary conditions or abatement of existing nuisance demanded attention. Your Medical Officer and Sanitary Inspector by visits carried out under the duties of this Act have been enabled to obtain much information as to the adequacy of houses in the district.

"Many cases of overcrowding were observed, and considerable difficulty was experienced in dealing with this condition, owing to the fact that there was usually no choice of other and more commodious residence to the families concerned. This has always, in this district, been the difficulty in dealing with overcrowding, every cottage in each village being almost invariably occupied.

"Defects of structure were frequently noted,



amongst the most important of which were deficiencies in roofs, and absence of eaves-spouting.

“Insanitary conditions were found, consisting of absence of drains, untrapped drains, and insufficiency of privies.”

NORFOLK : *Smallburgh*.

“There exists a widespread necessity for more and better cottages; even those in a good state of repair have one or more damp walls, and this defect in bedrooms especially is, I consider, serious. Some are damp from porous walls, some because the gutters are dilapidated or non-existent, and all the water from the roof runs down the walls. Few, if any, of the older cottages have any damp course, many having been converted from barns or stables.”

*Swaffham*.

“One finds that many of the houses are really unfit for habitation, and feels inclined to apply forthwith for closing orders, but immediately the question arises, ‘Where are the displaced tenants to find fresh houses?’”

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE : *Oundle*.

“If a house is condemned there is no other for the people to go to. . . . It is impossible to work the Act simply by demolishing houses.”

SOMERSET.

The County Medical Officer of Health’s report :—  
“In a good many villages throughout the county there is an undoubted shortage of houses—in some cases a marked shortage. Houses are gradually falling into complete disrepair, while very few are being built to take their place. . . . I have been repeatedly told that if such (unfit for habitation) houses are closed there is nowhere for the occupants to go to, there being no vacant houses; . . . to close them is to inflict hardships on the occupants and to drive them into the towns or the workhouse.”

SUFFOLK : *Woodbridge*.

“Five hundred houses inspected, 276 orders for re-



pairs; . . . an exceptional number of houses in an unsatisfactory condition.”

*Thingoe.*

“In many parishes there is, in my opinion, a deficiency of houses, and this position is aggravated by the inability to bring the majority of the very old ‘wattle and thatch’ cottages up to the present-day standard of sanitation. Cases of overcrowding are frequently met with, and under the present conditions there is no satisfactory means of remedying the evil. It is also a serious matter that young couples are hindered from marrying or residing in the district on account of the scarcity of cottages. In most parishes nearly every cottage is occupied, and in the few instances where houses are vacant, they are either in a bad state of repair, or are very small, or are in an inaccessible position. At the present time, therefore, I think it may be assumed that there is a scarcity of cottages and that there are a number of houses unfit for human habitation in many of the ‘open’ villages throughout the district, and it is most urgent the matter should receive attention.”

SURREY : *Farnham.*

“The effect of more strict regulations will be to close some small houses and to raise the rents of others.”

YORKSHIRE : *Doncaster.*

“There is a large amount of work to be done before it can be said that the housing is in a satisfactory state; . . . even when the people are prepared to offer seven shillings and sixpence or eight shillings a week in rent, houses cannot be obtained, and under the circumstances the serving of notices to abate the nuisances arising from overcrowding is inoperative.”

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